From the Author

THE SICILIAN CAPTIVE,

A TRAGEDY.

Præsens vel imo tollere de gradu
Mortale corpus, vel superbos
Vertere funeribus triumphos. HOR. l. 1. O. 35.

Εἰς τέλος γαρ οἱ μὲν ἐσθλοὶ τυγχάνουσιν ἀξίων,
Οἱ κακοὶ, δ', ὥσπερ πεφύκασ', ἄπερ' ἐυπράξειαν ἄν.
EURIP. ION.

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1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

RAMIRO, *King of Arragon.*
DON JUAN, *Brother to Ramiro.*
RAYMOND, *Prince of Palermo.*
ALONZO, *Regent of Arragon during Ramiro's absence.*
LEON, *Son to Alonzo.*
AVEIRO, *a rich and popular Citizen of Saragossa.*
VELASQUEZ, *a Dependent of Don Juan's.*

QUEEN, *Mother to Ramiro.*
CONSTANTIA, *the Captive.*
XIMENA, *Sister to Ramiro.*
CLEONE, *a noble Sicilian Lady.*

Lords, Guards, Attendants, &c.

SCENE,—The Castle of Saragossa, the Capital of Arragon.

THE

SICILIAN CAPTIVE.

ACT I.

AVEIRO *and* VELASQUEZ *meeting.*

Aveiro.

WHENCE now, Velasquez?

Vel. From the eastern gate
I've struggled through the press: our Saragossa
Till now ne'er labour'd with so vast a crowd.
The streets and ramparts seem instinct with life:
Each lattice glows with eyes; and every battlement
Appears to crouch beneath its breathing load.

Avei. The throng is great: and it would raise our wonder,
Did we not know that novelty has charms
To catch light minds, and fix the vacant stare.
The cry is now, " Let's welcome home our king
For three long years exposed to distant war
In arms for Christ against his pagan foe:

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For three long years exposed to distant war
In arms for Christ against his pagan foe:

And now return'd to rescue Arragon
From raging factions, and the ills that wait
On weak and delegated sway."

Vel. Return'd,
With the poor relicks of his once proud navy,
To boast of triumphs, which our blood and treasure
Have dearly bought; to talk of deeds of prowess,
And nice escapes, while scarce a man survives
Of his late numerous ranks to smile contempt
At the vain-glorious tale. "In arms for Christ?"
No! 'twas in arms for Christ's ambitious priests,
Whose cunning sanctifies the war that forwards
Their purposes of power. Is nature's Lord
So local in his love, as thus to doat
Upon one barren tract? or will the Prince
Of Peace accept the service which is tender'd
By hands yet warm with murder in his name?
'Tis priestcraft and abuse!

Avei. Abuse most gross!
But vain the attempt, and not unmix'd with danger,
To parley with this phrensy of the people,
Or doubt its holy licence to destroy.
But say, Velasquez, for I've stray'd no further,
Saw you the meeting of the peers and king?

Vel. For that I waded through this sea of people,
And well my toil was paid. The meeting seem'd
Like that of friends long parted, where the heart
Disdain'd the pressure of dull ceremony.

Scarce had the royal galley touch'd the land,
When the king sprang on shore, and prostrate kiss'd
The dear green tresses of his native soil:
Then, ere the hoary regent, scarce alighted,
Could bend his knee to earth, the sov'reign hasted
And clasp'd him to his bosom.

Avei. Old Alonzo
Must yield with pleasure his deputed sceptre,
Which still hath gall'd his hand.

Vel. His joy o'erflow'd,
And dew'd his reverend cheek. This night Alonzo
May haply taste that sweetness of repose,
Which three years regal labours have withheld
From his wrong'd age. The joy indeed in all
Seem'd equal: yet methought Don Juan's eyes
Belied his smiles even in his brother's arms,
And spoke some secret anguish in his soul.

Avei. He fear'd, no doubt, the censure that must follow
His daring plots against the state and throne
Of his king-errant brother.

Vel. Idly fear'd;
For, let me speak, who hold him not a god,
Ne'er did Ramiro's soldier-arms yet press
The cheated object to a heart of rancour;
Or fold the man his wrath had doom'd to ruin.
But Juan doubtless grieved that wars and storms
Should spare his brother thus to thwart his projects.

Besides the preference of power, as regent,
Given to Alonzo, may not cease to swell
The spleen of Juan.

Avei. But his years were then
Too weak for the high office; and the Cortes
With one acclaim approved their sov'reign's choice
To govern by Alonzo's firmer age.
Went Leon with his father?

Vel. Yes, and doubtless
Felt the full rapture of his father's bosom.
His thought, on love's proud height, looks down on power;
And from her brother's hand he now expects
The fair Ximena.

Avei. Justly may he claim her:
The suffrage of the nation makes her his,
Due to Alonzo's merits, and a lineage
Just touching on the throne. Ramiro cannot
Refuse to ratify his sister's choice.

Vel. No: yet 'twere wise to doubt. But heard you not
The news of Vasco's prize?

Avei. Yes: I have heard
That to Tortosa's port the gallant chief
Has brought a Syrian galley, whose resistance
Was prodigal of blood, and almost victor.

Vel. O this is trivial news! The fight, indeed,
Was fierce and doubtful, yet the toil, that panted,

The blood, which stream'd, were unregarded trifles,
Weigh'd with the prize of conquest.

Avei. Some great chief
In bondage to the foe?

Vel. No: a bright female
Whose charms outshone the jewels which emblazed her.
Our gay Ramiro has already seen her,
And, touch'd with her distress, has sent her hither
With letters to his mother and Ximena.

Avei. The king has eyes to feel the stroke of beauty;
And soon he'll teach the captive fair to smile
And revel in her chains!

Vel. O yes! no doubt:
And more expect to hear of her; for Juan
Hath been already active with his wiles
To gain her story, and to make her useful.
But see! they come: let's mingle with the crowd,
Near, but unnoticed. Juan soon may want us,
To share and aid his counsels.

[Avei. *and* Vel. *retire.*

Enter RAMIRO, JUAN, ALONZO, LEON, RAYMOND, *and* Lords.

Ram. Hail, ye walls!
Which to my thoughts restore those scenes of bliss

My earlier years have known: toss'd by life's tempest,
I hail your dear repose! If I speak fondly,
Forgive me, lords! A heart that wildly beats
With joys like mine, impels the tongue to riot.
And should my heart be calm, return'd to you,
Return'd to feel the affection of my people,
To hear their honest shouts proclaim my welcome,
From those bright regions, which the rising sun
Gilds with his purest ray! Reflection now
Leads me exulting o'er my former toils;
Turns all my marches in the noontide blaze,
My sleep beneath the unwholesome dews of night,
Stretch'd on the Syrian sands; my wounds and dangers
In the hard field against th' unchristian foe,
To softness and delight!—To thee, Alonzo,
Our honour'd uncle, are our thanks first due,
Thou pillar of our throne! Thou, Leon, too,
Heir to thy father's virtues: and ye, Peers!
Whose steady duty to your absent prince
Hath succour'd the weak state, accept our thanks.
If in this noble presence there be one,
And he to us and to our throne most near,
Who cannot claim our gratitude, it wounds
And checks me in my full career of joy.

Juan. Oh, spare the strong rebuke! You see me now,

My brother, deep in sorrow and in shame
For my past faults, the counsels of rash youth!
My manlier years shall be devote to duty,
To you, and to the state; my loyal service
Thus on my knee I tender. [*Kneels.*

Ram. And I take it.
In my glad arms once more I seal thy pardon,
And in the sunshine of my court will cheer thee.
Let now a pardon be proclaim'd to all:
The chain remit its grasp, and every cell
Surrender its pale victim! Let oblivion
Whelm in its depths the past, and a new age
Auspiciously arise!—But, noble Lords!
If you feel strongly, as I know you do,
This day's bless'd fortune, which restores your sov'reign
Rich with the spoils of Palestine, O! think
With what choice honours will you grace the being
To whom, next God, you owe it? From his hand
[*Pointing to* Raymond.
You now receive your king.

Alon. Though wrapt in wonder,
Thus will Alonzo welcome to his heart
[*Embracing* Ray.
The noble stranger whom our king thus honours!
Our grateful Arragon shall write his name
Amid her proudest worthies; and his form
In marble, breathing from the sculptor's hand,
Shall visit latest times!

Ray. Most honour'd monarch!
And you, his loyal peers! I shrink distress'd
From praise so disproportion'd to my claim.
The deed was chance, not merit.
Ram. Hear him not
Impeach his own high worth. That now I feel
The warm prerogative of life, now taste
The poignant relish of my people's love,
Is his heroic act! Nay, I will speak,
And speak so loudly, that my kingdom's echoes
Shall catch the glorious blazon. Leaving Candia,
Where a rude storm dispersed my trophied navy,
We touch'd at Serfo; so they call an isle,
Rocky and white, which rises in the Ægean,
Wide of our course: desert it seem'd, nor mark'd
By human foot: here, while my people moor'd
Their shatter'd vessels in the harbour's safety,
Alone and careless, to explore the land
I wander'd from my train; but soon had cause
To rue the rash adventure. As I rested
Beneath a cavern'd rock, secure of danger,
Six ruffians, whom a galley unperceived
Had landed near me, ere I could prepare
The means of just defence, rush'd fiercely on me,
And aim'd their sabres at my head: I strove
To ward their blows, but sank beneath their force.
At that nice, fateful instant, this brave man,
My genius, heav'n-commission'd to preserve me,
Sprang to my aid: by his resistless falchion

Four villains fell; the rest, sore wounded, fled,
And scarce regain'd their bark.
Leon. The deed was glorious,
My wonder and my envy!
Ram. Nor here ceased
My Raymond's care. Regardless of himself,
Whose wounds with crimson lips claim'd soft attention,
He stanch'd my streaming blood, and raising me,
Wand'ring and lost, like some celestial being
Impervious to the sense of pain or toil,
He bore me to my vessel in his arms:
There dress'd and tended, and with healing arts
Restored me to myself: but now the mortal
Was first disclosed in him; and nature, drain'd
Of her sustaining flood, refused to answer
To his great will, but sinking, gave him up
To the same death in which I lately slept.
Recover'd by our care, with urgent suit
I won him as the comrade of my voyage,
To taste the friendship of the king he saved.
Leon. Your Arragon, my liege, is poor and bankrupt,
To meet such large demands.
Ram. 'Tis mine, then, peers,
To find the recompence; and it shall be
Worthy of me, and of my friend; the heir
Of Norman Tancred, proud Palermo's lord,

Whose race and princely fortunes well may claim
The alliance of a monarch: then, my Raymond,
With such a dowry as befits our state,
Such wealth as shall exalt thee high among
Thy neighbour princes, thine be my Ximena,
[*Exit* Leon.
Whose charms, though ill their praises may become
A brother's tongue, are the loud boast of fame,
And may absolve my debt. Whence, lords, is this?
When your glad voices should approve my choice,
And thank me for the tongue I give your wishes?
Ha! Leon left our presence! Say, ye peers,
What mystery is this?

Alon. His heart seem'd full.
This only gift, to grace the noble Raymond,
Perhaps he deem'd too great; and I, my sire,—

Ram. Alonzo, hold! I would not hear a word,
Which might diminish the great love I bear thee.
Go! bid the tide restrain its flowing wave,
And shrink beneath thy voice:—if it obey thee,
Then hope to check the expansion of my hand,
Unfolding with my heart! No, Raymond! thine
Be my fair sister's love!—Who would not glory
To ally with worth like thine?

Ray. O! let me, sir,
Though warm to welcome all your noble friendship,
Retire from honours far beyond my hope.
O! let me sue to you to yield the splendour

Of these high nuptials to some favour'd noble
Of your own realm, with whom the lofty fortune
May meet his country's wish; and not to me,
A stranger, and undone!

Ram. What words are these,
My Raymond? wouldst thou slight my friendship's gift?
Or has the ungracious silence of my court
Given thee a pang of heart? This sudden grief,
Throned as thou art within Ramiro's bosom,
And wooed by purple greatness to its arms,
Moves my especial wonder: but no more
Of this ill-omen'd sorrow. You, my lords,
Embrace your sov'reign's wish; and thou, Alonzo,
Tutor thy boy to more respectful manners;
Bid him be ready with the court to grace
The nuptials of my friend; my will's announced;
And straight the altar shall be crown'd to witness
The high and holy contract.

Ray. Oh! 'tis ruin!
Trembling upon a narrow pass of fate,
How shall I scape the double gulph below me?
[*Aside.*
O, sir! restrain this zeal to honour me:
Regard the princess, sir! her heart may own
The just dominion of an earlier love,
And not be free for mine.—Yes! let me hence,
Graced with your friendship, to my native isle,

There with my proper forces seek the foe,
And pour my vengeance on his faithless head.

Ram. That thou shalt do; but not till thou art mine—
The name of friend lost in the name of brother.
My sister's hand is mine alone to give;
Nor would she risk a wish opposed to mine.
When thou art Arragon's, then shalt thou bear
My wealth, my forces to oppress thy foes.
At your fond instance have I sent already
To cheer your sire with tidings of your safety,
And speak the fortunes which my friendship means you.
Here, Juan, he is ours.

Juan. [*Embracing Raymond.*] With love as true
As brother ever bore to brother, thus
I fold lord Raymond, and receive with joy
The alliance which adorns our royal house.

Ram. Juan, I thank thee. You, my lords, retire,
Each as his pleasure draws: the hour of business
Will reunite us soon. [*Exeunt Lords.*]—More tender cares
Now claim me for a while; for, see, my mother
Comes with Ximena.

Enter Queen *and* XIMENA.

Let me thus, dear madam, [*Kneeling.*
Avow the duty of a son, return'd

To cheer your age, and bid it know the joys
A son's affection and a monarch's power
Can tender to its close.
Queen. My son, O welcome!
Thy mother's love pursued thee to the field,
And rose to heaven in prayers for thy dear safety.
Thanks that my prayers were heard!
Ram. My dearest sister!
Those years, which in the camp have worn my strength,
And plough'd my brow with wrinkles, here have nursed
Thy youth to vermeil ripeness; have unfolded
Thy symmetry of form; have in thine eyes
Kindled more sparkling honours; and suffused
A warmer tide of beauty on thy cheek.
By heavens, my girl! a monarch might exchange
His sceptre for thy love.
Xim. This flattery, sir,
Though from your lips it please, but ill becomes
The plainness of a brother and a soldier.
Exulting at your presence from the plains
Of cruel and blind war, perhaps my heart
May lend my face a lustre not its own,
And give the charms you praise.
Ram. But where, my sister,
Is the fair stranger? Has thy fond attention

Yet dried her flowing grief? Why comes she not
To share and raise the pleasures of the day?

Xim. Vain is my care, alas! to soothe her sorrow:
In love with grief, and faithful to her woes,
She heeds not the poor solace I can offer.
Save when she lifts her tearful eyes to mine,
And strives with falt'ring lips to thank my love,
She sits reposing in dumb melancholy,
Rigid almost to marble. Some dread loss
Sits heavy on her spirits.

Ram. Be it thine,
The task befits thy softness youth and sex,
With balmy cares to heal her wounded mind:
Explore the hidden pain; still shift the scene
Of pleasure to her eye; let music wake
Its sweetest melodies, through her pleased ear
To pour its rapt'rous softness on her heart.
With lures like these, and not with reason's voice,
Must woman be engaged. Tell her, Ximena,
Her prince himself will come and tender her
Whate'er the kingdom and the king can minister,
To light her cheeks with smiles: bid her be gay,
And not withhold the welcome that I merit.
For thee, Ximena, has a brother's love,
Still watchful for thy good, with lib'ral hand
Provided happiness.

Xim. Your love, my brother,
That with parental care has hover'd o'er me

From my first sense of life, is written here,
Deep in my heart, nor asks new acts to freshen
Its fading characters.

Ram. I know it, sister:
But of my kindnesses the last will waken,
When all the value of its good thou know'st,
Thy livelier gratitude. Hast thou yet thought,
Ximena, of the holy vow, which gives
Thy sex's charms in barter for our wisdom,
Our valour and dominion.

Ray. O confusion!
More ruin than my worst of foes could plan,
Now closely presses me! [*Aside.*

Xim. What means my brother!

Ram. 'Tis time thy state of sterile happiness
Should cease, at nature's order, for a state
Of useful and communicated bliss:
And from the hazard of the eventful choice
My age has saved thy inexperienced youth.
I have engaged thy hand.

Xim. O heaven! my brother!

Ram. Yes, with a vow engaged it; and no power
Shall step between my purpose and its object.
Beneath the rosy veil of maidenhood
Your heart shall bless my deed: thus then I give
[*Taking her hand and leading her to* Ray.
Your worth to this brave man, your brother's comrade,
His friend and saviour.

Xim. Oh! [*Faints.*

Ram. What can this mean?
Support and bear her to her chamber: there
Do thou, my honour'd mother, frame her mind
Apt to receive the blessing that awaits her.
As soon the winds and storms, which shake our forests,
Might hope to tear the polestar from its sphere,
As tears and fits, those arts and arms of women,
To bend my steady mind.

Queen. I hope not so:
Your purpose may be rash: surprise, you see,
Urged by the abrupt disclosure of your will,
Has broken on the property of life,
And stolen awhile its sense.

Ram. "Surprise!"—'tis well
I would not think the tumult of her spirits
To be of deeper cause. Prepare her, madam,
To meet us at the altar.

[*Exeunt* Queen *and* Xim. *supported.*

Ray. Thus, even thus,

[*Bending his knee.*

Let me intreat Ramiro yet to cancel
This generous plan of honour for his friend.
'Tis black, I fear, with mischief and distress:
Heaven looks not kindly on it!

Ram. Say not so.
On every act which honours peerless worth

Heaven must look kindly down. But let us hence!
Soon, Raymond, will I claim thy private ear,
To prove my weakness, and to ask thy counsel.
Juan, farewell! [*Exeunt* Ram. *and* Ray.

Juan. Farewell!—" thy private ear!"
Some amorous tale forsooth of a coy fair one,
To whom this upstart favourite, (at whose feet
I and the nobles of the realm must bend,)
Will be the interpreter of love, the tongue
Of stammering lewdness to reveal its wish.
Well: be it so!—this violence of friendship
May not be lasting; and I spy some matter,
Which, nicely touch'd, may shake it from its base,
And blow it into air:—this captive girl
May haply yield some means: her maid, already
Gain'd to false confidence by one I trust,
Will give unwittingly my projects aid:
And something has she blabb'd which time and skill
May shape to wound these friends—'twould greatly please me—

[Velasquez *and* Aveiro *come forward.*

Shamed thus before the court.
Velasquez, welcome!
Thy presence was most wish'd for: and, Aveiro,
I joy to see thee too!

Vel. Retired, my lord,
Behind the splendid throng we've waited only
The leisure of your grace.

Juan. Were you then near,
Spectators of our scene?

Avei. We were, my lord.

Juan. And heard the story of your monarch's virtues
From their best chronicler—your monarch's tongue?

Avei. The king, my lord, seem'd pleased with his own deeds,
His tone was high and soldier-like.

Juan. Aveiro!
Though of a brother, will I not disguise
Ungrateful truths; he is insolent and haughty:
His mind and manners, stern and strong for war,
Will fright soft peace; will trample on the order
Of civil life; will burst the barriers planted
By our wise sires against invading power,
And shake the balance of the well-poised state.
—But I may speak too plainly.

Avei. We are friends,
My lord, and—

Juan. Yes: I know you for my friends;
And I will trust you with my dearest treasures,
My fame, my life; and yet I dread to utter
All that I fear for Arragon.

Avei. The commons,
In Juan's influence on their monarch's counsels,
Behold their rights most safe.

Juan. Alas! poor men,

Who lean on the weak prop of Juan's influence.
Because forsooth they see the walks of life
Trodden by brothers, who, with arms and hearts
United fast in love, partake one toil,
One pleasure,— they can dream, weak, cozen'd men!
That in the council-room of Arragon
My voice may be as potent as the king's.
Alas! they are strangers to Ramiro's temper,
Headlong, unfeeling, variable:—for him
Reason has no controll, or nature ties.
His mind is all a storm: his love and hate,
Fierce as the whirlwind, like the whirlwind own
No certain law; now here, now there, they rage,
And sweep from every region of the sky.
The people know not yet, for zeal for them,
When in their cause he braved the regent's power,
That Juan hath been chid, and then disgraced
By insolence of pardon!—no: let them sue
To this new favourite! this Sicilian exile!
Their monarch's monarch! whom the light Ramiro
Hath chosen for a brother in my stead!
In him they'll find an advocate of power
To check the raised arm of authority;
In me a pardon'd criminal alone,
Who cowers himself for grace!

Vel. Not so, my lord!
Your fortunes strike too deeply in this soil,

To fear the shaking of a monarch's breath.
The people, sir, are yours.

Juan. Velasquez, no:
This trick of holy war has filch'd them from me,
And given them to Ramiro: didst thou mark
The pageant of this morn?—didst hear those shouts
Which tore the vault of heaven, and spoke their love
Of this their fighting king?

Avei. Mere children, sir,
Dupes of their senses: struck with novelty
They gape at their new king: religious bloodshed
May likewise for a time own charms to lure them:
But soon they'll turn, and give their truant hearts
To him who merits them. This alien too
Placed o'er the native peers must needs displease them,
And waken all their jealousies.

Juan. I think so,
And from that thought draw hope: suppose, Aveiro,
Through those accesses, which to you are open,
You could instill suspicion and alarm
Into the popular ear; suggest the danger
Of the king's boundless temper; show the counsels
Of Arragon subjected to a stranger,
Raised by caprice to shoulder on the throne,
And push me from my place; infer that only,
(Though power and safety now with me are one,)

For them I covet power: couldst thou do this,
Thou wouldst explore their temper, and mightst find
Some quicker part to fret them into rage.

Avei. Haply I might, my lord; and what I can,
Your grace may well command.

Juan. Aveiro, thanks!
To gain the nobles is a task more light:
On them this new-born brother of the throne
Leans with more instant and more painful pressure.
Thy ministry, Velasquez, I shall use
To prove this Raymond, and to make his weakness
The engine of his ruin.—Go, and say,
My love for him, and for my brother, speaks
When I would urge him to decline the nuptials,
Thus hurried by his friend; tell him they are heavy
With our great nobles' wrath; hint Leon's claims
And great allies; and show the wrong's near danger
Not to himself alone, but to his sovereign.
Tell him I am his friend; but when I give him
The safety of my counsel, wish my name
To be withheld from all.

Vel. I am perfect, sir.

Juan. I will to Leon: will he bear the loss
Of the fair object of his long-press'd suit?
His blood is not so tame: his present feelings
May grant me friendly audience; and his party,
Large of itself, and now, no doubt, increased
By wrongs, which blend his cause with every peer's,

Would swell our force beyond the dread of check.
Each to our parts with speed. [*Exit* Juan.

Avei. I like not this:
He'd kindly use us as his steps to reach
The golden fruit, and then—

Vel. O cease to fear him!
He's one of those, whose artifice deceives not;
Duped while he thinks he dupes. O, no, Aveiro!
Fear not to aid his mischief. If you doubt
His gratitude, before the deed be done
Bind him by compact, guard his faith by interest:
Connect your causes with such mutual ties,
That if he rises, you with him must rise
To share the vantage ground.

Avei. You counsel well.
But yet I like not by such crooked roads
To reach my destined end: I care not thus
To be the hand for Juan; and I feel
Some sickly scruples of the heart to use
His mischief for my profit.

Vel. Art thou then
So new to this good world, as not to know it
A stage, on which the skilful and resolved
Seize all the prizes, while the nice and timid
Walk foil'd and shamed away?

Avei. Thou talk'st, Velasquez,
Like one most learn'd in men.

Vel. I knew the world:

And thou shouldst know it too:—why life, Aveiro,
Is a sharp game of selfish subtlety;
Where all our nature's passions and corruptions
Are but as counters to the wise to win with.
Think'st thou I love this Juan? No. I know him
Designing, faithless, cruel; dead to friendship,
To hate alive and faithful: yet I serve him;
Wait on his nod; caress and flatter him;
And mould him to my purpose, while I seem
Pliant alone to his: to make me useful
He makes me great; and all his favours to me
Flow not from what is done, but what is hoped,
In purchase not in bounty. To the winds
Throw thy respect of means, if thou would'st seem
A man with men!

Avei. Your lessons may do much
To make your pupil perfect: yet some doubts
May still impede his action, though not stop it.
I'll labour for thy lord; and prove my power
To raise the civick storm, and lift thy Juan
High as his own proud wish:—a son of peace,
I like not this fierce king; and from their quarrels
We and the subject people may assert
A juster rank and interest in the state. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

CONSTANTIA *rising from a couch, and coming forward.* [*Music.*

Con. THIS pageantry is fine: these gorgeous rooms
Which glitter on the sight; these royal couches
That woo to pompous rest; these harmonies,
Of power to breathe a spirit into death,
Or, while the body panted on the rack,
To steal the soul from pain,—to me are nothing;
My eyes, my ears fast closed against delight
By the dread hand of woe!

SONG *behind the Scenes.*

Come, Fancy, from thy airy seat,
With orient colours spread,
Where earth still laughs beneath thy feet,
And heaven above thy head.

Thy voice the warbling lapse of streams,
Or breath that lulls the groves;
Thine eye of heaven's empyreal beams,
Creating as it roves.

O come! and with thy wizard art
Cause sun-gilt scenes to rise;
Bid love and pleasure warm the heart,
And laughter light the eyes.

O cease that strain!
'Tis impotent to please: could it recall
My tender parent from the deep's dark bosom,
In which she sank, with shrieks that echo still
To my affrighted sense: or could it baffle
Assassination's dagger, and restore me
The lord of my pure love, it would be sweet;
Heaven's angel-quires not sweeter! Last sad night,
In the short moments of distracted slumber,
Methought I saw my husband, pale and cold,
Stretch'd on the waves, his bier: instant I sprang,
I know not whence, and press'd him to my bosom.
When, strange! life's colour kindled in his cheek;
His eyes resumed their lustre, and he gave me
Caresses warm as mine!—Oh! it was rapture!
Oh! for another instant bless'd as that!
'Twas but an instant: a black whirlwind rush'd,
And tore him from my arms!—what can it be?
The wild creation of a mind diseased:
No more. The Princess comes, whose generous friendship,
And manners soft as spring, might calm a soul
Less toss'd with cares than mine.

Enter XIMENA.

Xim. O, madam! still
In tears? my love may haply swell their flow,

Whcn it would seek their source. Ah! tell me whence
These sad effusions of a heart in anguish,
Which all the kindnesses of Arragon
Are feeble to restrain?

Con. Alas, dear Princess!
My griefs defy all cure: if any hand
Could ease them, it were thine. From our first meeting
My friendship claim'd thee, and with warm adoption
Made thee her own: but to declare my woes
Would only plant a poniard in thy bosom,
And thus afflict me more. In one place only
Can I hope rest.

Xim. Thy country, dear Constantia?

Con. The grave!

Xim. Alas!

Con. That cold but shelt'ring house,
Where wretches find repose:—there do I long
To lay my wearied limbs, and with the dead
Enjoy that peace, which here I must not know.

Xim. Ah! cease, my sister, if I may indulge
In that fond name: ah! hush these notes of woe,
Too sad for any wretchedness but mine,
Who now would soothe your griefs.

Con. What says my friend?
Lost as I am, I still can pity thee,

If thou hast pangs to throb:—but say, with thee
Whence is the misery that sighs thus deeply?
Dost thou not bloom within thy native walls?
Lives not a mother's tenderness to cherish
The softness of thy youth? Does not thy brother—

Xim. O name him not! from him—

Con. Why is he not
The soul of bounty? Is his eye not quick
To search the latent want? His hand not open
To pour the large supply?

Xim. Yes, yes! but he—

Con. Nay, give it speech: I have an ear, fair Princess,
To feel your tale of sorrow.

Xim. Oh! relentlessly
Hath he torn strings most vital to my heart,
And left me nought of life, but pain alone.

Con. What canst thou mean? some soft affection broken
By power's unfeeling hand?

Xim. O Leon! Leon!
Thou object of my purest love, whom years
Had ripen'd in my heart!—and must I lose thee,
Forced from thine ardent vows, and faithful service,
To be the consort of a foreign lord?
No! death alone shall form the sad divorce.

Con. With me that dread divorce hath pass'd already,—

Me wretched beyond hope! [*Aside.*] Refuse not
comfort;
Vows justly breathed, he cannot violate:
If not regard for thee, the fear of heaven
Must teach him to respect them.

Xim. No! 'tis sworn!
He drags me to the altar, the sad victim
Of vows and love not mine.

Con. It is most sad!
Yet may his will relent: the Queen may soften it;
Her influence must have power:—hope yet is yours;
Despair is mine alone!

Xim. Would I could change
My fortunes for Constantia's!

Con. Ah, dear maid!
Thou know'st not what thou wishest. Half the woes
Which press upon this breast, would crush thy
weakness,
And stop thy feeble heart.

Xim. Can there be worse
Than to be rent from him, for whom alone
Life were a blessing, and, while nature's self
Rises against the outrage, rudely forced
To a strange bed? Constantia has her woes,
But every where Constantia's charms and virtues
Must find a world officious for their welcome:
Here sceptres wait them.

Con. Ha! what means my friend?

Xim. Ramiro loves thee!

Con. Choak the dreadful word!
Ruin is in it! Oh! it hath waked in me
A strong alarm, that like a serpent tears me!
" Ramiro loves me!" saidst thou so, my friend?
Forbid it, heaven, by death!

Xim. Ah! whence, Constantia,
This frantick grief, when fortune like a prodigal
Offers you blessings?

Con. Art thou then so quick
To feel thy violated bosom's pain,
Yet hast no touch of mine? want'st the respect
Due to my faith, which ratified in heaven
Cannot be cancelled here? This court, Ximena,
With gilded shows of greatness charms your eye,
And bribes your youthful reason: ill you know
Constantia's soul, to think it can descend
To play with toys like these!

Xim. O pardon me!
I thought alone to please!

Con. In some calm hour
I'll wound you, since you wish it, with a story
Whose softest word will tear your tender heart,
And float your eyes with tears.—

Enter Queen.

This goodness, madam,
To the poor child of sorrow, more adorns you
Than royalty's bright wreath.

Queen. Forbear the praise!
I pity, for I've suffer'd:—but, Constantia,
Whate'er have been thy woes, forget them now;
And, when the fates relent, admit their kindness
With smiling reconcilement.

Con. Never, madam!
Will I requite heaven's free and bounteous gifts
With churlish thanklessness: that I am snatch'd
From pagan hands; am where Christ's blessed name
Is breathed with adoration, and soft friendship,
Far far from home, thus tends me with its cares,
Kindles my soul with gratitude to Him,
The one full source of good! But, ah! dear lady,
When his dread will decreed me in one day
Orphan and widow, it decreed me then
A mourner to my grave!

Queen. This is grief's arrogance,
Vaunting itself against its sovereign time;
And reckless of the law, that round life's circle,
Varied though uniform, bids joy and sorrow
Pursue each other's steps. Thou think'st me happy;
Nor am I wretched; rest bestrews my couch
With its soft dews, and scarce a morning looks
From the bright orient on my face in tears:
Yet when pale thought reverts, it moves my wonder
That e'er my lids should feel sleep's sweet oppression,
Or cheek should know a smile. Thou hintest losses
That give the breast quick pangs; but to my woes,

Thrown from a consort's arms, and in a dungeon
Far from heaven's wholesome breath, deprived of friends,
Of my sweet child, of fame,—of all but virtue,—
Thine sure are feeble.

Con. Pardon me, dear lady!
Grief chills my heart, and something whispers me,
" Constantia, hope no more; to thee, henceforth,
" This scene must be a blank:"—but, if a wretch
Like me may find such grace, appease the wonder
Raised by your words: the Queen of Arragon
Plunged in a dungeon, robb'd of child and fame!
Most strange, and past belief!

Queen. What! has Ximena
Not given you the sad story of my woes,
Entangled with her sighs?

Xim. No! honour'd parent,
I've caught it but imperfectly from rumour,
As circling in the court; once you began it,
But soon you closed with tears.

Queen. I was not then
Time-proof against its anguish. Know, Constantia,
A thousand suns repair'd the glorious day,
Yet shot no beam to me, involved in darkness,
Impenetrable as the grave's;—cut off
From every tender hand and soothing voice!
One frugal meal, thrust through a sullen grate,
Supplied life's small demand.

Con. O! speak the cause,
(For crime it could not be,) which thus exposed you
To sufferings sterner than should scourge the mischief
Of man's worst guilt.

Queen. The monarch's jealous fury;
(He bore a fierce resemblance to Ramiro.)
Because I would not brand myself with crimes,
Abhorrent from my soul, or stain my conscience
By drawing vengeance on a guiltless head
With lying crimination,—he entomb'd me
A corse with sense of pain!

Xim. Ah! what sustain'd you
Against such desolating woe?

Queen. 'Twas innocence
And heaven, my child! For death full oft I pray'd,
And oft I groped my prison's narrow bounds
For means of dissolution: but as oft,
Heaven sent supplies of comfort to my bosom,
And gave my heart new life.

Xim. My spirits sicken
To hear of such distress!

Con. But how at length
Emerged you into day?

Queen. The king assured,
By proofs on proofs, of my unsullied conduct,
Though late, restored me with his love to honour;
And this girl's birth confirm'd our reconcilement.

But, ah! his fondness, that with lenient arts
Essay'd to close the wounds his rage had caused,
Could never give me back the beauteous infant,
Of whom his phrensy robb'd me.

Con. Infant, madam!
What! could a hand be found so hard, so grasping
For the dread act of murder, as to wrest
From smiling infancy life's fresh, dear loan?

Queen. There was, and yet it fail'd; ah, vainly fail'd!
A babe, who made me feel a mother's pains
Without the joy, and, heedless of her crime,
Saw the blest light some days before I lost it,
Doom'd by her sire to bleed, I stole from death,
And trusted to a lady of my court
To bear, I thought, from danger; but, alas!
To perish on the waves, or, if on land,
By wolves or famine!

Con. Heard you not her doom?

Queen. Ah! never: 'twas my charge to bear her straight
To Pisa, where I knew some tender hands
Would aid to cherish her for brighter times:
But Pisa's walls she never saw; and since
My fond solicitude has sought in vain
My friend and my Elvira!

Con. Lost, no doubt!

Queen. Yes! lost beyond all hope; and many a year

Her fate has ceased to anguish, though my grief
Was once as strong as ever wrung a mother
For her deluded throes:—hear this, and blush
To talk of life-long sorrows! But the king
Approaches; and Ximena and myself
Must wait within to press him with a suit
Of vital moment. Fie! receive your fortunes!
And meet him with a smile.

[*Exeunt* Queen *with* Xim.

Con. Meet whom? the king?
Is't even so? then is my state most wretched!
Heaven lend me help to bear it!

Enter RAMIRO.

Ram. Sovereign lady,
Say, hath your treatment in our realm been gracious?
Been princely? Such the word we gave, and still
Effect has follow'd as we spake.

Con. Yes, sire!
Imperial bounty, with its richest stores,
Has minister'd around me, and most swiftly
Outrun my very wish: my gratitude
Is deep in debt for thanks.

Ram. O! name not thanks!
The paltry coin I scorn; nor is it due:
Beauties like thine in the unfeeling savage
Would plant a heart of kindness, and enforce

To his stern mind humanity's sweet lesson:
Must they not then have power with us, who foster'd
In nature's softest lap, are warm and tender,
With all the infusion of her finest sense?
Thanks! no, Constantia! all my kingdom's wealth
Lies at your feet, not as a gift, but claim'd
By your imperious worth.

Con. Forbear, great sir!
To wrong your nobleness of soul, which gives
Its holy bounty to distress and God,
Nor heeds an humbler motive. If these features
Could urge a claim to praise, the praise would pain me;
For these poor beauties lost the wish to please
With him for whom alone they bloom'd.

Ram. Ah! no!
The scorn to please is most unnatural:
'Twas not their maker's will those charms should perish
The prey of fruitless grief; the property
Of the cold dead, in whom they cannot call
One sense to joy. No! clear them from the woes
Which stain their glowing lustre!—if indeed,
As your wild words betray, you have lost one
Most native to your heart—

Con. O spare me, sir!
The subject strikes too deeply!

Ram. Your bright sorrows
Have strewn their pearls profusely on his bier,
And made it amply rich. He heeds you not;
And nature's loud against a grief that thwarts
Her purposes benign. Oh! let me then
Restore you to life's blessings!

Con. [*kneeling.*] On my knees
I beg you to desist:—suspend a strain
Which searches to my soul!

Ram. Rise! rise! Constantia.
But must I not admire, at nature's bidding,
What she has form'd most fair to be admired?
May I not call the mourner from her woes
To happiness and—love?

Con. I must not hear you:
'Tis insult to my state!

Ram. What, thus to tender you
The homage of a king?

Con. I ask it not:
It suits not with my fortunes, and a mind
So ill at ease as mine.

Ram. O! let me offer
To raise those fortunes and to heal that mind!

Con. Your power is far too weak.

Ram. To lift the captive—

Con. 'Tis generous surely thus to taunt the fallen!
That I was captive, was the crime of fortune;—

That now I am, is thine;—for Christians rescued
By Christians from Christ's foes should be as free
As air or light.

Ram. O hear me yet! to give thee
Tenfold for what thou'st lost,—friends—

Con. Wo is me!

Ram. And country—

Con. Well, restore me to my country,
If yet I have a country [*aside.*]—and I'll thank you.

Ram. Yet let me speak! Yes, friends and country, madam,
My bounty largely shall bestow, with wealth
To make you envied.

Con. Bear it to your beggars!
Their wretchedness may take it. This poor life
Can need but little; and even that I ask not!
I had a jewel once of far more worth
Than all thy sparkling crown: when spoil'd of that,
I lost all taste of wealth:—the sun himself,
Though throned in gold, and flinging o'er the heavens
Pure, fluid, vital gold, wakes not within me
A feeling of delight.

Ram. Perverse and proud!
Wilt thou not hear my suit? I am a soldier,
Unused to play the suppliant.

Con. I am the suppliant,
Who sue to be dismiss'd.

Ram. Unthankful woman!

Con. He, who upbraids with benefits, remits
The dues of thankfulness: we now are equal.
If thou wouldst prove thy bounty, let thy navy
To my dear country waft me: then I'll praise thee!
Or if that boon be more than thou can'st grant,
Restore me to the deep, from whence the Syrians
Snatch'd me, with kind, yet cruel hands, to meet
Worse death within these walls.

Ram. Ungentle fair!
Who slander'st thus my nobleness of purpose,
And treat'st with scorn a passion warm and gen'rous
As ever swell'd within a mortal breast.
Ah! whither wouldst thou fly?

Con. I must retire.
My fortunes are so harsh, they make my ear
Impatient of your theme, and I may speak
That which I would not: fain would I esteem you;
And therefore must I go. [*Exit* Constantia.

Ram. And am I spurn'd
By an ungrateful woman? forced to bend
Beneath a captive's frown?—No, my proud soul!
Hence let her go, who slights an offer'd palace,
And seek her native cot!—Yet, can I lose her?
My fate seems one with her's; and my fierce love
Imperiously asserts her as its right.
Her charming haughtiness inflames my soul;
My wonder and my passion, while it wounds me!

Perhaps I sued not rightly; and she wish'd me,
True woman still, to snatch what maiden coyness
Alone withheld: yet she seem'd firm: 'tis strange!
Win her I must, or perish.—

Enter RAYMOND.

This, my Raymond,
Is kind indeed! 'twas now I wish'd thy presence,
And thou art here.

Ray. I come, my friend, in haste,
To breathe my fears into your secret ear,
And ask your patience, that these honour'd rites
May wait till more deliberate thought has proved
The deed of friendship, and explored its danger.

Ram. Fears! danger!—why, my Raymond, what is this?
In the loud storm of war, when thousands panted
On the red plain, my nerves have never trembled.
And bosom'd in my country,—in my palace,—
Fenced with my people's love,—what puny danger
Can make my bosom beat, were it alive
With even a coward's heart?

Ray. I know you fearless;
Fierce in the rage of battle with the fiercest:
But to solicit danger,—to defy
With headlong rage those evils we might shun,
Is phrensy, and not valour.

Ram. Well, my Raymond!
Thou, only thou of all my race should'st hold me,
In this wild moment of tempestuous passion,
To the cold audience of instructing prudence.
Speak then your fears; and, if I smile, forgive me.

Ray. Then, sir, a murmur, busy through the town,
Reach'd me even now, that speaks your peers displeasure
To see the honour of your sister's hand
Gracing a stranger: Leon's claims, they say,
Are far more just, sprung from a kindred stock,
And bound by a firm interchange of love
To the fair Princess.

Ram. Leon's claims more just!
If, while my mother slumber'd o'er her charge,
He stole with subtle arts my sister's love,
Say—can the pilferer vindicate his right
To his unlawful spoil?

Ray. But, sir, the Princess!

Ram. O name her not! young, fanciful, capricious,
The creature merely of the eye and pulse,
She knows not what she would: and should a girl,
When monarchs' counsels urge their awful purpose,
Oppose her feeble stop?—her voice and hand
Must wait upon our will.

Ray. The nobles actively
Avow her cause and Leon's.
Ram. Let them rage!
What can they do to me? The Pyrenean
Derides the storm, which breaks upon his side
With feeble enmity. My people, Raymond,
Raise me to be the scourge of these proud men,
Who neighbour on the throne, and would o'ertop it.
Ray. Trust not the people, sir! some dark intriguer
May catch their giddy hearts, and turn them from you.
Ram. Never—or if he could, why thou and I,
With my bold faithful troops, would pour upon them,
And teach them to respect their injured monarch.
Ray. And should I then submit to be the brand
To kindle war between the prince and people?
Forbid it, friendship! and forbid it, honour!
Far be such guilt from me! I claim your promise
To speed my passage home: there death alone
Shall tear the grateful memory of Ramiro
From my tenacious heart.
Ram. I should be moved
If I could think—
Ray. I cannot, sir, betray you
To ruin in my cause.
Ram. Well! if thou lovest me,

Dismiss this idle talk. To-morrow, Raymond,
Shall prove thy terrors lighter than the atom
Which trembles in the sun-beam. Let me now
Pour out my heart to thine. Thou think'st, my friend,
That I am man:—alas! thou art deceived:
I am weaker far than infancy.

Ray. Thou only
Should'st slander thus my friend:—I pray thee, speak!
Thou'st roused my best attention.

Ram. Know me then
A woman's slave; the captive of a captive;
Subdued by feebleness!

Ray. What, sir, in love?

Ram. Yes, Raymond; strangely, deeply;—each fierce passion
Devour'd by fiercer love!—O, I will speak—
And blush in scorn of what I cannot conquer.
'Twas just ere our eventful interview
On Serfo, that, invited by the tidings
Of a rich Turkish galley newly taken
And brought to Naxia's port, I left my ship,
To thank the bold atchiever of the deed,
And view the wealthy spoils.

Ray. All this you told me.

Ram. Ay, but I still withheld one blushing circumstance

Even from thy ear.—The captive infidels
Pass'd me in files: beneath their gloomy lids
Flamed red defiance; and a haughtiness,
That raised its brow in chains, and still breathed war,
Provoked my wonder: but that wonder, soon
Absorb'd in greater, ceased. In Vasco's hand,
Our victor-chief, the treasure of the Turks,
An angel maiden came: she seem'd not human,
Or human only by the grief that sweli'd
And gemm'd in her blue eyes.

Ray. You paint most warmly;
Love holds, I see, the pencil.

Ram. My best tints
Are far too poor to emulate the life.
I cannot speak her features: when I tried
To scan their fair perfection, character,
Beaming with heaven's full radiance, threw its mantle
Over their lovely union, and restrain'd
My eye with jealous lustre. By deep grief
Sore wounded, not subdued she seem'd: her soul,
Superior, strove to mock the pain which nature,
Weak nature sharply felt: soft was her air,
Though firm and lofty.

Ray. 'Twas a prodigy!

Ram. Yes, Raymond, a bright prodigy! She spoke,

And strains of musick flow'd: her accents melted
On the charm'd ear, as morning's finer dew
On the cheer'd rose bud.

Ray. Why this beauteous Turk
Was form'd to speed love's lightning to the heart:
No bosom could be proof against the stroke.

Ram. Mine was not, Raymond: in my veins I felt it
Raging with deadly heat, and pouring fierce
Its fiery torrent on my prostrate heart.

Ray. But reason, sir, I trust, soon gave her aid,
And check'd the mischief: Arragon's high king,
Proud champion of Christ's cause, could never take
Pernicious beauty to his arms; would never
To the wrong'd altar lead an infidel,
The shame and ruin of his faith.

Ram. O, Raymond!
Even that weak shield was wanting to my virtue:
Hung on her dazzling breast a ruby Saviour
Bled on a cross of diamonds.

Ray. Heavens! her country?

Ram. That she reveal'd not, but with native truth
She spoke our language:—that her race was noble
And Christian; that the grief, whose silent flow
Dew'd her soft cheek, gush'd for a dear connexion,
Lost in the bloody tumult of the conflict,
Was all that I could learn.

Ray. [*aside.*] The alarm was idle.

Ram. I saw her twice, and at each interview
Drank deeper draughts of fire: but then the sense
Of what was due to the just claims of sorrow,
Urged by a recent wound, restrain'd my passion,
And bound its struggling tongue. I sent her hither,
To share my palace, and amid its splendours
Forget to weep.

Ray. And learn to smile. You mean
To raise her to your bed?

Ram. O that I could!

Ray. Why if her strain be noble, and her blood
Of Christian source, what can oppose your will?

Ram. Her own proud will, my friend.

Ray. What she reject
The proffer'd crown of Arragon?

Ram. Yes, Raymond;
The crown of Arragon and all its glories
She holds as trifles: in this very hour
I've laid them at her feet, and she has spurn'd them!

Ray. You speak of wonders! But, perhaps, to raise
Her hand's rich worth, she draws it back awhile
In coy and wise reserve: she would be thought
To yield it to her love, and not your sceptre.

Ram. It may be so, my friend; and I am awkward
In this new craft of wooing: used to war,
I cannot catch love's sweet and lisping accents.

Then aid me, Raymond. Nature, when she form'd thee,
Prepared her finer mould, and fix'd persuasion
Resistless on thy tongue.

Ray. What canst thou mean?

Ram. Go to this haughty fair; adorn my purpose
With all thy happiest skill; disclose my passion
In its full blaze of ardour; set before her
A kingdom in bright view, and make her feel
What 'tis to be a queen!—Go! go in power;
And conquer for thy friend!

Ray. O pardon me!
The subtle sigh of love can ne'er be wafted
In its full spirit from another's lips.
I'll fight for thee,—not woo.

Ram. Refuse me not:
My life's in thy assent!

Ray. Thus forced, I yield:
Though from your mouth the suit which fail'd to please,
From mine will be her scorn:—will she not say,
"Because Ramiro could not speak, or, haply,
"Because he chose to slight me, he deputed
"His friend to love for him?"

Ram. No more, my Raymond:
Go, and prevail! Success must ever wait
A tongue like thine!

Ray. Well then, ere long I'll prove it.

[*Exit.*

Ram. Ha! Juan!—in this moment of waked interest
His presence is unwish'd for.

Enter JUAN.

Wherefore this?

Juan. Pardon me, sir! I fear to trespass; yet
A brother on a brother's privacy
May sometimes break, and not be thought to trespass.

Ram. Well, Juan; hast thou aught thou wouldst confide
To my especial audience?

Juan. Was it, sir,
Lord Raymond who now left you?

Ram. Yes: but whence
The idle question?

Juan. 'Twas indeed most idle.
A brother, sir, must to a brother be
Most dear.

Ram. I think so, Juan.—'Psha! this trifling
Will throw me from my patience. [*Aside.*

Juan. In one womb
They slept, and from the fountain of one bosom
Drew their first vital draught.

Ram. Why this, my Juan?

Juan. Their childhood sported in one ring together;

And their pleased parents with an equal smile
Survey'd their playful innocence, and strove,
In aid of nature's plan, to blend their hearts
So truly, that the world with all its passions
Should never rend their union.

Ram. This to me?
Have I denied thee love? or has my conduct
Belied a brother's heart?

Juan. Hence be the thought!
I've found you kind and princely; and my heart,
By nature's honest barter, is your own.
Tired of the perfidy which opens still
In each new friendship, offer'd by the world,
We turn at last, and find the truth we sought
In her just residence,—a brother's bosom.
Know you Lord Raymond?

Ram. Know him, Juan? yes;
Next to his God I know him: not a motion
In his pure lucid breast has shunn'd my view;
And all I've seen is fair and just and noble.

Juan. His mien and countenance bear generous witness
To your tongue's praise: he seems, indeed, most noble;
And should be what he seems.

Ram. And is.

Juan. 'Tis well.
You think you know him.

Ram. Think I know him, Juan?
Why wilt thou urge me thus? Is he not all
My heart can shape him, or my lips express?
Thou darest not speak him less!

Juan. How? dare not, brother!

Ram. No! for thy soul thou darest not!

Juan. Sir, I love him!
And therefore—

Ram. No! thou wouldst belie him; wouldst
Taint him with some injurious thought:—with me
Thy malice cannot work.

Juan. Nay, nay, my brother!
A common feeling for our house's honour
I thought might give me privilege to speak,
When danger seem'd to menace it.

Ram. What's that?

Juan. I deem'd a brother's interest in a brother
Might give me licence even to weigh suspicions,
That touch'd upon your peace.

Ram. 'Tis well! speak on;
I'll hear thee.

Juan. No! my love and honesty
Offend;—and I am mute.

Ram. I pray thee, speak.
The spark that flash'd is quite extinct, and now
Thou mayst not dread my temper.

Juan. O my brother!
Why treat me rashly thus?—and can I trust you?
Ram. Most safely:—nay, proceed!
Juan. Thou sayst thou knowst
Lord Raymond; that thy diving eye can reach
His deepest bosom: with an eagle-glance
Thou canst, I know, pervade the marshall'd war;
See where thy fainting battle calls for aid;
Or where, from the just yielding foe, coy victory
May be compell'd:—but canst thou penetrate
The close dark cell of thought, or search the maze
Where character lies hid? If not a god,
Thou canst not: yet thou sayst, "I know lord Raymond."
Ram. And so I do: a congress of our souls,
An intercourse, as unconfined and liberal
As of pure spirit with spirit, has reveal'd
Raymond to my pleased eye; and I have planted him
In my heart's citadel.
Juan. Be it so;—and yet
You may have much of him to know, my brother!
'Tis not a month,—a year,—perhaps a life,—
Which can disclose the man: no! you may feast
At the same board; may from one ardent cup
Quaff bright exhilaration; may be with him
Before the morning's drowsiness be fled,
And till the night's steals on;—yet may not know him.

Ram. This is all random, Juan! wisdom's semblance;
Folly in grave disguise.
Juan. 'Tis truth!—not time,
But situation drags the man to day.
Thou'st seen this Raymond only in a calm,
When not a breeze has stirr'd a vagrant hair:
Go! try him in the storm! let some small interest
Awake the sleeping selfishness of nature
To call his passions into play;—why, brother,
His tongue shall slander, and his hand betray thee!
Ram. Thou wrongst him foully, Juan!—Raymond? never!
For me he'll yield his life.
Juan. He'll not resign
One childish darling of his heart for thee,
Or for thy friendship's worth.
Ram. 'Tis false! what mean'st thou?
Juan. Mark'd you his deep confusion, when you gave him
Our sister's hand?—think you his strange reluctance
To welcome the proud fortune was a feeling,
(Too nice for man,) of what was due to claims
Born ere his own?—or what was due to thee,
The aim of censure for thy lavish friendship?
Ram. What could it be besides? no interest blended
With the rich act to lower its sterling worth.

Juan. Interest! why that is interest which we deem so.
To give the master-passion what it asks,
Be it a crown or mistress, is to give
To selfish good;—is, sir, to play the prodigal,
Lured by persuasive interest! His ambition
Yields, on my life, to love.

Ram. Impossible!
Where is its object?

Juan. That I can't resolve.
Has he beheld your captive beauty?

Ram. Never.

Juan. That's strange!

Ram. Why strange? so new to Saragossa,
How could he see Constantia, wo-retired,
And shrinking from all eyes?

Juan. That's true, indeed.
Yet ere she came here, might he not have seen her,
As thou thyself hast done?

Ram. That has he not:
Wherefore suspect it?—Heavens! my soul's on fire. [*Aside.*

Juan. Why this Constantia is a dame of soul!
Crush'd as she seems by woe, she will not tamely
Support your chain: but yesternight her maid
Was heard in treaty with I know not whom,
Bidding most largely for the means of flight.

Ram. Gods! how is this?

Juan. 'Twas so: a trusty person,
Who follows in my train, by chance was near
And unperceived.

Ram. Hell! be that man produced!

Juan. He shall attend you straight.

Ram. But what of Raymond?

Juan. Something was dropt about a princely lover,
Yet 'twas not much, which brought him to my thought:
But he has never seen her; and 'tis nothing.
Yet sure I am, some charmer of his fancy
Hath robb'd you of your wish; deceiv'd your bounty;
And,—O forgive me if the thought disturb me!
Exposed Ximena, as an alien's scorn,
To the world's blighting sneer!

Ram. That, Juan! that
Shall never—but I'll not admit the pain,
Which thou wouldst force on me. Now leave me, Juan:
My ear has long been thine. To-morrow's sun
Shall shine away thy doubts.

Juan. That sun, Ramiro,
Which is to see Ximena bride to Raymond,
Will never climb the east!

Ram. Forbear me now. [*Exit* Juan.
My temper yet may start!—no more!—My bosom
Is deeply shaken. What! can Raymond? no!

'Tis Juan's fraud, or error. Juan's fraud?
What interest can urge it? placed by birth
The second in the realm, he stands above it:
And then he darts into the breasts of men
An eye of keen research. That he should err,
Is possible,—not likely:—well! the doubt
Will quickly now be o'er. But, my Constantia!
I scarcely dare to think of her; yet from her
I cannot draw my thought:—to her and Raymond
Fate has confided all my hope of bliss. [*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

Raymond.

THERE I shall find, they say, this towering beauty,
Who turns from kings, nor stoops to wear a crown!
I thought my Sicily alone contain'd
The wonder of her sex: but here resides
Something of rival nobleness in woman.
Yet 'tis imposture surely;—female craft,
By flight to conquer, and with pride to chain!
My task may then be light: but, press'd with cares
Of weight to crush me, can I for my friend
Plead and not wrong his cause? I fear it much.
What toils beset me! how, and not offend
Ramiro, can I shun these fatal nuptials?
If I proclaim my vows, will not the tale,
Borne to my father, wake his fierce resentment
Against my wedded love? or, should I court
Ramiro's secrecy, would he not spurn
My slow and now exacted confidence?
Would he not ask with rage, " Why linger'd this
" Now to confound me with my ruin'd plans,
" And my fair sister's slight?" Would he had left me
To famine and the rocks, and not have rescued me,
To die with subtle torture on the rack

Of his tumultuous friendship! O my bride!
Shall I once more behold thee?—Ah! who knows
What black reserve of tempest yet may wait me,
Ere I regain my long-lost peace and blessing
In thy dear arms, Constantia?

Enter CONSTANTIA.

Con. What known voice
Thus names Constantia? or what power forbids her
To rush into his bosom?—Raymond! oh!

Ray. By all my hopes of heaven, 'tis she!—Constantia!
This burst of transport is too rude for thee!
O speak again! assure me thou art mine,
Nor wilt elude me like a dream!

Con. A dream!
No, Raymond, this is certainty! yet say,
What power has snatch'd thee from the murderous foe,
And bade the deep restore thee?

Ray. Heaven's, Constantia,
Won by thy goodness!—but thy spirits, love!
Are in alarm:—mine too are strangely wild
To see thee here, thus distant from thy home,
A stranger and a captive!—If thou canst
Assert a moment's calm, O rid my soul
Of its fierce wonder! for my presence here

To thine is such a dull event, as life
Holds every day to view.
Con. I will controll
The flutterer in my heart, and speak. That day,
On whose dear fatal morn our hands were join'd;
That day, my Raymond!—O what toils and woes
Have sever'd it from this!—that day—
Ray. O speak!
You promised to be calm!
Con. I will. That day,
When to elude the jealous eyes of power
You sought your castle from the conscious altar,
And scarcely finish'd rites,—that fateful day
I waited thy return 'till gradual night
Had sown the sky with stars: my fears alarm'd,
Then roused my friends, and messengers were sent
To explore the causes of thy strange delay,
Our panick and our grief:—the strong recurrence
Of my sad feelings, when the tidings came
Of thy disastrous fate, o'erpowers me now
Though resting on thy bosom.
Ray. 'Twas indeed
Disastrous, my Constantia!
Con. Dreadful, Raymond!
More dreadful from the jealous gloom which rested
On the black deed, and left it to be shaped
By mad and lawless fancy: all we learnt
Was, that some ambush'd foes had intercepted

Thy wish'd return; had forced thee to a vessel,
And then had launch'd to sea.

Ray. 'Twas true; assassins
Hired by my foe, Rinaldo. But thy fortunes—
O give me them!

Con. Thou'st often praised my firmness;
'Twas then unequal to the shock! I rush'd,
(Vainly my friends would stay me,) to the port:
There hired a bark full mann'd, resolved to search
The main for him I lost.

Ray. Alas, Constantia!
Knew'st thou our course?

Con. Of that I thought not; passion
Ruled solely the blind hour, and hope still snatch'd thee
From the fell robber's gripe. But scarce had land
Retired from our strain'd sight, when a strong corsair
Bore down upon us: vain was all resistance;
And in a Syrian cabin died my hopes
Of thee, and of myself.

Ray. I tremble for thee,
The prey and insult of base infidels.

Con. Forbear to wrong them: in the cloister's sanctity
I had not been more safe: for the five days,
In which with varying winds we steer'd for Asia,
These generous infidels revered my sorrows;
Breathed not offence, and tended on my wants
With delicate restraint.

Ray. Most noble this!
Christians without the faith!
Con. They were indeed!
And were it not for thee, my soul's best treasure,
Whom here beyond all hope I clasp, the hands
Which shifted my sad prison to this palace
Would not deserve my thanks.
Ray. But to your story.
Con. 'Twill now be briefly told. A Spanish galley,
Parted by tempests from Ramiro's fleet,
Met and engaged and conquer'd us; then bent
Her course to find her king. On Naxia's isle
Ramiro saw me; whence, with princely orders
For all that I could ask but liberty,
He sent me, trusted to our gallant captor,
Before him here:—the rest perhaps you know.
Ray. Too well.
Con. Ah, Raymond! but I burn to hear
The strange events to which I owe your safety,
And this most wondrous meeting.
Ray. Ill the time
Will bear the tedious tale; and for a part of it
I'll ask an hour less busy. Seized, disarm'd,
And forced into a sloop, for six long days,
Within its dark recess, I waited death;
And only from the billows hollow dash
Beneath her prow knew that the vessel moved,

A stranger to her course; when my stern captors
In gloomy silence brought me up to day;
And, landing me upon a rocky isle,
There left me, far from human aid and pity,
To death or wretched life.

Con. Tigers! and monsters!
Remorseless as the grave! what thus abandon thee
Fresh from life's richest feast?

Ray. Some scanty food
They gave, and one, more generous than the rest,
Threw me my trusty sword.

Con. And was the isle
Most truly desert? had it not a shed
To guard thee from the storm, or minister
To nature's poorest wants? They could not mean
The stern barbarity of lonely death?
How couldst thou 'scape?

Ray. That isle no doubt they chose
For pale, unbloody, and sequester'd murder.
Its hollow rocks alone, or tangled woods,
(Which offer'd famine's grasp a meagre meal,)
Form'd my damp lodging: but not many suns
Had seen my sorrows, when the mystic will
Of Heaven decreed my falchion to preserve
Ramiro's threaten'd life.

Con. Most strange! and now
His friend thou visit'st Arragon?

Ray. 'Tis so.—

Yet one thing more resolve me:—when the king
This morn portray'd thee as an unknown fair,
His notice of that various cross, which flames
On thy dear bosom, brought thee to my mind
With a strong pang of heart; but then he said,
And eased that pang, that for some dear connexion,
Who perish'd in the fight, thy sorrows stream'd:
What could he mean?

Con. Thou wakest, alas! a pain
Which in thy arms had slept: ah, my loved parent!

Ray. She lost!

Con. For ever! neither prayers nor tears
Could keep her from my fortunes. In our tumult,
When captived by the foe, the faithless deck
Beguiled her foot, and the deep surge involved her.
Frantick I plunged to save her, or to perish;
Nor more perceived, till my reviving sense,
Upon a Syrian couch, restored my loss
And gave me back to woe!

Ray. The stroke was dreadful!
I feel it poignantly; but other cares
Now summon us: upon a giddy height
We tremble, and the lightest breath may shake us
From our uncertain station.

Con. What can fate
Do more to hurt me? all its rage is spent;
And thou art mine again.

Ray. Ah! no, Constantia!

Know'st thou for what I sought thee? for whose love
My tongue is pledged to sue?

Con. Ha! death! the king's!

Ray. Too surely his! he loves thee with an ardour
That mocks the lightning's flame: the lioness,
Mad for her rifled den, feels not the rage
He will, when robb'd of thee.

Con. Why he must know thee
To be Constantia's, though he know not yet
Constantia in his captive.

Ray. Ah! I still
Held from him that sole secret; nay, to bury
In deeper darkness what might touch thy safety,
Spake of myself as free:—but, heavens! we scarce
Had reach'd this palace, when his bursting kindness
Pour'd down confusion on my head, by giving me,
Before the assembled court, his sister's hand.

Con. "His sister's hand!" Ha! Raymond, art thou false
To thy deep vows, and to my faithful passion?
Go! go! I hold thee not!

Ray. What means my fair one?

Con. Ximena's beauty and her high alliance
Have won thee from Constantia; and I yield
Without complaint: be it so! What! not to plead,
When moved to perjury, thy plighted faith!
'Twas perfidy and guilt!

Ray. Too timid prudence,
Urged by my fears for thee: but, ah! forbear
To waste on vain suspicions the few moments
Our fates indulge us for the hope of safety.
I'm thine—thine only; and will claim Constantia
From an opposing world: but prudent yielding
May haply break the shock which harsh resistance
Would only make more fierce.

Con. Well then, I'll wait
Upon your counsels; though a bold disclosure
Would suit my fancy best.

Ray. No: Leon's right
To the fair Princess is affirm'd so strongly
By the united realm, that it must stand:
And then your coldness may so far subdue
The monarch's passion as to make him patient
Of his friend's claim. I will report you fix'd
In stern refusal, deaf to all I urged,
Impregnable to art or prayer; and should he
Renew his visit—

Con. O my part is easy!
It is the part of nature and of truth,
And I can act it well; for thee I fear:
Unused to artifice, the treacherous blood
Will falter in thy cheek, and thy tongue stagger
With its new falsehoods.

Ray. Cease to fear, Constantia.
Should our more gentle practice fail, I'll seize thee
For my true bride; and, with the laws to vouch

The justice of the act, will bear thee hence.
This now—and part. [*Embracing her.*

Con. So soon?

Ray. 'Tis soon, indeed;
But short shall be my absence: and I see Juan
Drawing this way: I like him not; his eyes
Gleam malice and design. [*Exeunt* Ray. *and* Con.

Enter JUAN.

Juan. Aye, aye! 'tis well!
Toy with her hand, and soothe her amorous ear!
'Twill work thee woe ere long! these luscious draughts
Shall turn to gall, and richly shalt thou pay me
For thy short triumph o'er my brother's friendship.
Weak and abused Ramiro! this I told thee,
('Twas then indeed surmise, but now 'tis knowledge,)
And thou with rage didst turn from it. I long
To force it on thy ear, and with thy torture
To feed my hungry vengeance. Should thy fall
Follow the working of my plans, the event
Would be most great; and so perhaps it may,
If fortune favour wit.—But Leon seeks,
I see, more conference with me: he is my power;
And men like him—

Enter LEON.

Well, Leon, hast thou weigh'd
What late I spake to thee?

Leon. My Lord!

Juan. I swear
By heaven's blest light, I never was thy foe,
Nor yet thy father's.

Leon. I believe it, sir.

Juan. To you and yours a friend, my contest still
Was for the state alone. I hoped, indeed,
One day to call you brother.

Leon. Ah, lord Juan!
That day must never come: how the thought tears me!

Juan. Hence with this feebleness! she should be thine;
And, if I live, she shall: the king's deceived,
And acts not like himself: what, for a stranger
To take her from thy vows!

Leon. The injurious act
Hath struck most deeply at my love and honour;
Hath sever'd me from happiness for ever;
Yet must I own that Raymond has his claims:
He saved the king.

Juan. Yes, and for that I hate him! [*Aside.*
"He saved the king!" why 'twas the deed of chance;
His tongue confess'd it: and when thus he ventured
He knew, no doubt, 'twas for a king, and eyed,
With prudent scan, the honours and the wealth
Which were to crown his act, besides enlargement
From his isle-prison: it was merchant bounty

Lavish'd for large return.—I see nought in him,
Or in his boasted deed to merit praise,
Or my rash brother's favour.

Leon. Nought, indeed,
Thus to strike down with an o'erpowering hand
The proud memorial of Alonzo's honours
In the king's mind!

Juan. 'Tis strange—'tis foully wrong!
But all the nobles feel with you.

Leon. They should:
Affronted thus, and injured for a Norman,
Mine is a common wrong.

Juan. They own'd it common;
Their angry looks so told me in the presence:
And I, lord Leon, as in station first,
Am first in honest feeling.

Leon. Then, my lord,
The king may soon repent—

Juan. There let me stop you:
Beware the tempter passion; and, O guard
Your threaten'd loyalty!—Try first the means
Of soft remonstrance: to the king repair;
Dwell on the honours of your noble house;
Your services, your father's; your great friends
Hurt by your wrongs; your long and licensed suit
To our Ximena.—Go! the king must yield:
I'll give you all my power; and soon we'll push
This Norman from his honours and his mistress.

Leon. But should the king not yield?

Juan. Why then indeed—
Yet yield he must: our party is too strong
Not to secure respect,—aye, and fear too!
And even your right itself, when urged with power,
Must force the king's regard: my brother's dear,
But not so dear as honour: should he not
Redress you, I am your's in all your purpose.
Within you'll find the monarch.

Leon. Thanks, lord Juan!
I'll go and try petition. [*Exit* Leon.

Juan. Go, fond man!
And, ere his love to Raymond catch the blight,
With every word thou breathest excite Ramiro
To tenfold outrage: speak thy faithful love?—
It will be guilt!—thy father's honours?—insolence!
Thy strong and numerous friends?—most trait'rous menace!
And all thy pleading will incense a spirit
That scoffs at danger, and admits no barrier
To an impetuous will: why he'll insult thee!
And then thou art wholly mine.

Enter VELASQUEZ.

Borest thou, Velasquez,
My purposes of friendship to lord Raymond?

Vel. I did, my lord.

Juan. What said he? or how look'd he?
Was he disposed to thank my loving care,
Or to resent it?

Vel. Some surprise and doubt
At first, with gentle variation, mark'd
His features; but 'twas quickly o'er, and then
He was what you would wish him.

Juan. What, Velasquez?

Vel. Grateful and pliant to your views: his fears
Pointed one way with your's: the realm, he knew,
Would be impatient of a stranger's fortunes,
Built high as his: he would decline these nuptials,
With their invidious greatness. If I know man,
His heart was on his tongue.

Juan. Partly it was:
These nuptials he would shun; I'm in the secret:
But for the greatness, if I err not widely,
He would make shift to wed it. He's no more:
I have him safe, Velasquez!—Hast thou seen
Aveiro since we parted?

Vel. No, my Lord.

Juan. Nor caught a rumour of his hoped success
With the attempted people?

Vel. Not a breath
Has reach'd my ear; but awkward must he be,
(And that he is not,) if he fail to stir them,
Ripe as they are for ferment.

Juan. How is this?

Vel. The king's wild deeds in fame have burst abroad,
And, fast'ning on the common mind, have roused it
To thought and anger.

Juan. Say, how know you this?

Vel. Passing along the street, I saw a knot
Of rabble-politicians, all, with looks
Of deep importance and mysterious dullness,
Talking of danger to the state from favourites
Squat at the royal ear, and tainting it
With foreign breath to Arragon's confusion.
Not far removed I met another cluster
Of greasy, ill-attired, mechanick knaves,
Who seem'd much injur'd by lord Leon's wrong;
Who talk'd of justice with most grave respect;
And vow'd we ne'er could prosper, if Alonzo
And his brave son were used thus thanklessly:
Tongues strove with tongues upon the theme; a Babel
Of sapient statesmen open'd on my ear.
One solitary voice spoke of Ramiro
As worthy to be praised for his past sufferings,
Fighting for Christ; but the weak plaudit soon
Was drown'd; and Raymond and his dangerous patron
Swell'd the full din of hate.

Juan. This, my Velasquez,
Is greatly to my wish!—Spake they of me?

Vel. Not as I heard, my lord: but soon Aveiro
Will give them strong possession of your wrongs,
And turn for you their cry. Have you aught else
In which I can be useful?

Juan. Come with me,
And I'll employ your offices.

Vel. My lord,
You'll not forget the recompence?

Juan. Fear not!
It shall be great and speedy. But away!
Leon, I see, has met the king; and here
They come in warm debate. [*Exe.* Juan *and* Vel.

Enter King *and* LEON.

Leon. "No more!" my liege.

Ram. No: hence!—I'll hear no more!—What! leave our presence,
Like a base groom's, ere yet our words had ceased,
Wrath in your eye, defiance in your mien?
And then, with prate of fancied wrongs, to stir
Sedition in our realm?

Leon. Far from my soul
Were thoughts like these, my liege! but the fierce trial
O'ermaster'd my best strength: when ling'ring hours
Had brought at last the moment, which, I deem'd,
Would lose my hope in rapture—then—Oh then!
To see a stranger—

Ram. "See a stranger," sir!
Forbear the injurious term! your sovereign's friend,
As dear to me as is the life he gave me;
Whom Arragon should proudly claim as her's,
If truth and loyalty had charms for her,
Before those idle, haughty sons, who, sprung
From her fair lap and fatten'd at her bosom,
Vent envious breath at virtues placed above them.

Leon. Forbid it, sire, that I should e'er arraign
Lord Raymond's worth! but surely it might find
Some other rich reward than that dear hand,
To which I plead my right.

Ram. Must you instruct
My recompence of virtue? and your right?
Explain this vaunted right.

Leon. The right, my liege,
Of my true love; my high and kindred blood;
My father's faithful service—

Ram. Not so warmly.
Who authorised your love? not we whose right
Alone it was to cherish or condemn it.
A princess' love is not her own to lavish;
It is the sovereign's: with unmanly stealth
You practised on a weak girl's heart.

Leon. My liege!

Ram. Nay, so it was:—and then these services,
Your father's and your own, with which I'm taunted,
What are they?—I adorn'd you both with power,

And for that power you struggled,—for yourselves;
And now would flaunt your service in my face
With insolent pretence, to check your sovereign,
And circumscribe his rights.

Leon. Your grace must know
That we have friends of power; that these we lent you
To prop the throne: these too, my liege, may feel
Our house disgraced in me.

Ram. Upbraid me first,
And then assume to threaten? Seek those friends!
Go, range your rebel files! even at their head
I will defy thee, traitor!

Leon. Traitor? saidst thou traitor?
Heavens grant me patience!—traitor! O, 'tis due
For all my loyal service!

Ram. Dare again
To taunt me with thy service?—thus I pay it!
[*Strikes him.*
Hence, and avoid my sight! [*Exit* Ram.

Leon. Traitor! a blow!
Damnation!—to a king like this allegiance
Is shame and guilt, not duty.—Traitor! struck!
Confusion!—wither'd be the tongue—the hand
That dared the outrage!—

Enter ALONZO.

Art thou come, my father,
To witness my dishonour?

Alon. What thus moves thee?
What outrage? what dishonour?
Leon. O I'll tell thee!
Furies and darkness! is it come to this?
Slander'd! disgraced!—distraction! sink the world;
I'll after him, and hurl again the traitor
On his detested head!
Alon. Thy words are wilder
Than thy wild looks: what slander? what disgrace?
Whom wouldst thou follow thus?
Leon. Ramiro!
Alon. Ha!
The king?
Leon. The base, the injurious king!
Alon. Hold, Leon!
Upon thy duty, hold!—what deed could urge thee
To madness dire as this?
Leon. O! 'tis a deed
To goad the most unfeeling into rage;
To light a fever in the veins of death,
And make it rave!
Alon. These starts of senseless fury
Distress me, Leon: well I know the king
Hath wrong'd thee, and with thee our noble house;
But we must let it pass: the times advise
Our soft forbearance, and the people claim it.
The realm, scarce settled from its former tossings,
Must not again have its yet tremulous surface

Broken and confused for us: the storms of state
Have burst for many a year round this grey head,
And made it ake for quiet:—ah! I know
The charms of peace, and fain would close my eyes
On her sweet bosom. Little think the great,
Who wage their quarrels with the people's arms,
What human pain they cause; from their black pride,
In its wide waste, how many tearful eyes
Shall claim the sire, the husband, or the child!
Let the king give his honours as he will;
Let us beware of crime. Thou feel'st thy loss
Like a young man, my son; and yet thou know'st not
If it be surely thine:—I come once more
To press our just demand: remonstrance yet
May bend the king's design.

Leon. Remonstrance, sir?
It has been tried, and it has brought on me
Disgrace and ruin!

Alon. Let the monster forth
That threatens in thy speech! "Disgrace and ruin?"
Impossible!

Leon. Am I a traitor, sir?

Alon. A traitor?
What tongue could hazard the cursed lie?

Leon. Ramiro's.
He call'd me traitor! hence he bade me haste,
To raise my rebel troops!

Alon. The king but ill
Consulted his own honour when he rashly
Thus blotted ours. Ungrateful man! a traitor?
My son a traitor? foremost in the field,
His blood has flow'd for thee! and in the senate
His tongue has propp'd thy cause!—Traitor? my heart
Knocks at my breast! what was thy crime to pluck
Such mischief from his lips?

Leon. An humble suit
For my invaded rights and injured house;
This made me traitor: had his injury
Rested even here, it would indeed have shaken me,
It would have burnt my cheeks—no more—but now
I stand o'erwhelm'd, my father! shamed for ever!
By every power, he struck me!

Alon. What, a blow?
And from the man, whose arms so lately strain'd us
To his fond bosom as the tried supporters
Of him and of his throne! then here must end
My hope of sweet repose; yes, I must bruise
My aged limbs with steel: the foul dishonour
Must be effaced with blood. Juan will smile
To see us plunged in feuds.

Leon. Lord Juan, sir,
Glows for our injuries with noble warmth.
Within this hour he pledged his faith to me
To lend us all his power.

Alon. What Juan? Leon,
It cannot be: the regency assign'd me
Still rankles in his heart: by the duped people
He sought our ruin; and that deep offence
He never can forgive us.

Leon. His pride, sir,
Now blends him with us, crush'd alike by Raymond:
Distrust him not.

Alon. Still must I fear him, Leon:
But let us rouse, and meet the boist'rous crisis
With our best spirits: let us raise our friends;
In such a cause their zeal will be most lively:
And let this thankless monarch find us, boy,
Not prone to anger; but, when urged by deeds
Like his atrocious, dreadful to the guilty;
And strong to shake his palace to its base. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

RAMIRO, RAYMOND.

Ram. WHERE hast thou linger'd? my distemper'd soul
Has thirsted for thee.—By the holy cross,
There is I know not what that shakes me strangely
When I would ask thee, Raymond, could she slight
The crown thy tongue adorn'd? By heaven's Majesty,
Your silence and your leaden weight of eye
Chill me with horrid omen: tell me all:
You found her fair at least.

Ray. Yes, fair indeed;
Oh! fatally too fair! [*aside.*] yet surely, sir,
Your Arragon, in her bright files of beauty,
Can boast of some as fair. Were I Ramiro,
The wish of rival charmers, and the aim
Of eyes sky-kindled * for desire,—no, never
Would I descend to be the prostrate slight
Of a proud captive.

Ram. Talk not thus, my Raymond!
Of all her sex alone this wayward captive

* Sky-tinctured. MILT.

Hath had the power to quicken my dull breast
To any sense of love; and she hath urged it
Even to torture: the round world without her
Were but a sterile ball!—the tow'ring forest;
The traffick-bearing sea; the winding river,
Which clothes its meads with green; the cluster'd mountain
Red with its vintage, and the yellow plain
Without her, Raymond, would be one dark waste
To my uncherish'd eye: from her they draw
The tints with which they please.

Ray. O heavens and earth!
Let not the tale be told in Asia's streets,
Thinn'd by thy falchion, lest their girls and babes
Should feel malignant joy,—their terror shrunk
Into their scorn,—the sport of puling fancy,
With her green death upon his cheek; for life
Trembling most abjectly upon the grant
Of one coy sullen female.

Ram. Is this kind?

Ray. Most kind, Ramiro: should I see my friend,
In life's and fortune's proudest affluence,
Pine of a gangrene, yet not risk his cure
Lest I should give him pain?

Ram. Cease! 'tis too late:
That which thou call'st disease is now my life—
To cure it were to kill me:—long I've breasted
The opposing surge with all my best of man;

It bears me with it now: 'tis fate! 'tis fate!
I throw for her or death.

Ray. Ah! yet reflect:
With conscious dignity reclaim your happiness
From alien hands: O leave it not suspended,
Loose on the point of any smile or frown
Which feels not your controll!

Ram. I'm on the rack;
And all my forces muster round my heart
To meet the ruin: trifle then no more;
But let me know my fate.

Ray. Canst thou yet doubt it?
Have not my faltering accents and my countenance
Told thee thy hopes are vain;—told thee, my friend,
That I with thee am wretched?

Ram. Gods! even so?
Is she not passion'd like the rest of earth?
Has she no weakness in her mortal bosom?
No softness, pride, or fear? did she not doubt
As she refused a crown,—or weigh'd the danger
Of obstinate denial?

Ray. No: she's firm
Against the strong temptations of your suit,
As 'gainst the waves the rock, which meets their fury
And throws it into foam.

Ram. Swells not thy wonder?
If she be human, human is the parent

Of conduct which thus towers: canst thou conjecture
What poisons the fond welcome of my passion,
Or what sustains her firmness?

Ray. A first love,
That, monarch of her breast, disdains a rival,
And will not be expell'd.

Ram. I'll tear it thence!
Was she not born for me? the wretch, who once
Possess'd my rights, fell in the fight; nor can he
In death reign o'er the living.

Ray. He survives:
She knows it. 'Twas her mother whom she lost
In the sea-fight.

Ram. "She knows it!"—who hath told her?
This morn she wept for him. Ha! Raymond! doubts
Come o'er me: she hath been profuse to thee
Of confidence;—and thou—let me not think of it!
Hast thou been honest to thy friend?

Ray. How? honest?

Ram. Yes honest! by the power of truth thou falterest!
And the black treason of thy heart bursts out
In flames upon thy cheek!—couldst thou condemn
My weakness like a judging god,—thyself
The slave of weakness—guilty, spotted weakness?

Ray. This, sir, is madness, and I can forgive it.
How strong the suit, you know, which forced my weakness

To this strange task, and for its hapless issue,
As if I were a god indeed to form
Her soul and shape its passions at my pleasure,
You brand me now with guilt my soul disdains.
Is this well done?

Ram. No, Raymond!—pardon me!
Phrensy has seized me, and I start at shadows.
Pity thy weak lost friend!

Ray. I would restore him.

Ram. Restore me!—never! then assist me still,
Even to the madness which has hurt thee friendly.
Lend me once more thy breath to try to soften
This beauteous marble which belies warm life:
Visit her yet again!

Ray. I dare not, sir.

Ram. O fear not, Raymond! my dark jealousy
Shall never more break on thee: with thy voice
Still, still enforce my suit; and should it fail,
With all thy arts to move, press on her fears,
And sternly place before her trembling sight
Consent or death.

Ray. You would not surely make
The sword thy minister of love?—not woo
Desire with death's grim features?

Ram. Ha! I know not:
The fierceness of my soul is all in arms.
I fight for being, Raymond, and 'tis just
That she submit or die. It was but lately

Her maid was mark'd discoursing with some ruffian
Muffled in darkness.

Ray. How, sir!

Ram. Nay, 'twas so:
In treaty for her mistress, who resolves
On flight, perhaps on vengeance.

Ray. Ah! great sir,
Recall your reason: can a helpless female,
Environ'd with your guards, plan aught of danger
To you or to your state?

Ram. A woman's rage
'Tis never safe to slight: thou know'st not, Raymond,
How much she dares; and, strong in charms and arts,
She acts with kingly power:—yes! it is fix'd!
She must be mine, or she shall die the victim
Of publick justice, on a publick scaffold.
I am settled to the deed:—yet I would see her;
And not inflame her pride by seeking her:
Then draw her hither, Raymond, that our meeting
May seem the effect of chance.

Ray. No! I'll not go:
I have been shamed already there and here,
And will no more adventure.

Ram. Generous Raymond!
Let not one sally of my frantick humour
Level at once the works of toiling friendship.
I must not be denied.

Ray. But should I yield,

Hope not for more success; and when I come
Foil'd from the enterprize, forbear—
Ram. Ah! check
The sharp suggestion ere it strike and wound me!
Ray. Well then, no more! [*Exit* Raymond.
Ram. O madness thus to nurse
The baby passion, till it grew a fury
To shake me with her frown, and with her torture
Turn life into a curse! shall I draw back,
And seek my peace in flight? the attempt were vain:
I must proceed, though thunder should forbid me:
Yes! though, with lightnings arm'd, fate bar my passage,
I now could dare the reddest aim of it,
And on.—My nature strangely jars:—even she
Who bore me was but lately chid with harshness,
And sent in wrath away, because she sued
For Leon and Ximena: and this Juan,
Whom the Creator gave to be a friend
In contact with my heart, is as a scorpion
To my vex'd sight.

Enter JUAN.

Why, phantom-like, thus haunt me?
What is my guilt?
Juan. I seek thee as a friend,
Warm with thy wrongs and mine.

Ram. No windings, Juan!
Straight to your fact! what mean you?
Juan. Saidst thou not
That Raymond's conduct was most clear in motive,
Not æther purer?
Ram. Yes; and is it not?
Juan. Go! put the question to thy captive fair,
Whom he had never seen! she'll praise, no doubt,
The truth and faith of Raymond!
Ram. No dark hints!
My temper will not bear them.
Juan. She will speak
Of his soft power of love; and she will tell thee
Why this Sicilian lord should slight our sister,
Her dowry and her charms!
Ram. Furies and devils!
Dare not to play with me: give me what prompts
The phrensy of thy speech—or—
Juan. Nay then: 'twas lately,
Led by lord Raymond's voice, with just suspicion
I stole, on guarded feet, to where I found him
In earnest converse with the prize of Vasco:
Eager and warm he seem'd.
Ram. O is this all?
To plunge thee deep in shame and grief for ever
For thy rash charge, I sent him: 'twas my business
Which breathed in his warm converse.
Juan. Then 'tis well.

You sent him, sir, to trifle with her hand,
And smother it with kisses.

Ram. Ha! saidst thou?

Juan. Most faithful to his mission, sir, he press'd
The lily wonder, ('twas indeed a wonder,)
So closely to his lips, as if he sought
To rifle it of whiteness; and, 'tis true,
It blush'd beneath the pressure.

Ram. Heavens! 'tis false!
It could not be.

Juan. This still is the reward
Of love that would not see thee wrong'd: thou art blind,
And dost not know it: though his fond attentions
Play'd with her hand, they did not settle there;
With her ripe lips familiar.

Ram. Up to heaven
Thou liest! he durst not, villain!

Juan. If I live
I saw them lip to lip:—at sight of me,
As guilty spectres from the bird of dawn,
They vanish'd: but to you and me, Ramiro,
This is not much: 'twas somewhat free indeed
For a first interview; yet what of that?
His passion for the captive can touch us,
But as it wrongs our sister.

Ram. No—why—no—
Wrongs her?—aye, her: whom can it wrong besides?

Who said that I was wrong'd? Ye gods! I'll tear—
O patience!
'Tis nothing—to the winds!—O burst not, heart!
[*Exit* Ram.

Juan. Yes, go! the shaft has deeply drunk thy blood:
There let it fester! something have I gain'd:
I thought, indeed, our amorous king design'd
This captive girl for a light summer's toy,—
No more:—he doats, I find; and this his friend,
The envoy of his passion, for himself
Hath won her with false love: why! this is fine!
Blow, all ye winds! I'll ride upon your pinions,
The master-genius of the storm.—But soft!
The lovers come: forbid it that my presence
Should damp one glowing speech. [*Exit* Juan.

Enter RAYMOND *and* CONSTANTIA.

Ray. Our path, Constantia,
Is set with perils: every way I turn
I see deep ruin opening to devour us.
We are lost, my fair! we are lost!
Con. Weak-hearted man!
Where is the boldness which but now you boasted?
O give me back the Raymond I once had!
Ray. Ah! would to heaven I could!
Con. Say, what has changed thee?
Is the king fierce?

Ray. His bosom-wilderness
Is all one dreadful roar: our Ætna's self,
Convulsed with fighting elements, bears not
Half of Ramiro's tumult in its breast:
Yet would he be my pity, not my dread,
Had I not quell'd myself:—I am the coward
Of my own act, Constantia!

Con. Coward? Raymond!

Ray. How little think we, when we shrink from truth,
That the first faltering step may plunge us deeply
In weakness and in guilt! who now should see me,
My strong self lost, aghast at every breeze,
Would see the vengeance of offended truth.
Why did I fear to avow thee as my own?
Truth then had saved me, and thy Raymond's soul
Unmoved had met her fortune.

Con. Do it yet:
Resume your noble nature; claim your consort,
And in the lists assert her.

Ray. No! I dare not!
O! were my sword once free to plead my right,
Ramiro soon would cease to be the spectre
That scares my pallid thought: but, ah! his friendship;
His fatal confidence, by me deceived,
Hang weights of lead, Constantia, on my nerves,
And bear down all their spring: to claim thee now

Would be peculiar ruin;—'twould be shame,
Detected perfidy!—His just suspicion
Even now assail'd me;—and, by heaven! Constantia!
Thy Raymond trembled like a chidden babe:
The dastard blood recoil'd upon my heart;
Then pour'd its crimson on my cheeks, and wrapp'd them
In guilt's deep mantle: were it not to part us,
Death would be nothing; but to live dishonour'd,—
The mark of scorn's raised finger as a false one
Exceeds my powers of firmness.

Con. This I fear'd,
When thou wouldst wield art's new and dangerous weapons.
But think not of it thus: thy heart was right;
Thy fraud is harmless: all thy breath for him,
If thou couldst lavish it, would be as idle
As the light wind which sports within my tresses:
Dismiss then self reproach.

Ray. What's to be done?
Thou seest me here his friend, with all my faculties
Engaged to urge his cause.

Con. And wouldst thou gain it?

Ray. O heavens! and am I not most deeply wretched,
Thus to be bound to do, what, were it done,
Would heap more woe on my distracted head
Than all that fancy, in her darkest hour,

Hath dreamt of death!—Ha! hath thy mind e'er dwelt
On this pale close;—this silence of the pulse;—
This iron slumber of each flatter'd sense;—
This fearful shifting of our mortal vest;—
This trembling change of being?

Con. Ah! why this?

Ray. Say, has thine eye look'd firmly on the tomb,
That empire of corruption, where the worm
Feasts on the spoils of beauty, and to horror
Converts the gaze of love?

Con. Why try me thus
With the poor cheat of death? our guilt or fancy
Arms him with his dread dart: the grave's deep night,
Corruption and the worm may fright the living,
But to the dead are nought. Oh! I've thought of it,
And, but for thee, could fall without a sigh,
And make the tomb my pillow.

Ray. Then, my fair,
We're safe beyond Ramiro's love to hurt us.

Con. Show the grim phantom of thy mind! I'll meet it
Without one trembling nerve.

Ray. The furious king
Prepares to win thee with far other weapons
Than those of suppliant love!

Con. What means the tyrant?
Ray. To force thy weakness—
Con. Ha!
Ray. To gain thy hand,
Or give thee—ah! Constantia!
Con. What?
Ray. Or give thee—
No!—no!—he can't: the angel in those eyes
Will tear from his fell purpose all its horror,
And plant it with a smile!
Con. O speak his purpose!
Ray. Death.
Con. Can he threaten death?
Ray. A scaffold.
Con. Well,
I can sustain the shock: the tyrant's captive,
My life is in his hands: thanks to my God!
My mind is all my own, above his reach.
Ah! Raymond! must we part—to meet no more?
How know we that?—beyond this tossing world,
When we have reach'd at length those happy climes
Which storms can never shake, where not a cloud
Rests on the face of day, but boundless light
Purples the horizon round, we'll meet, my Raymond!
Spring to each others arms, and drink of bliss,
Pale with no dread of change. But saidst thou not
A scaffold, Raymond? he can shed my blood;
The assassin's point may do it, and no tongue

Question a captive's fate: but can he drag me,
Without the charge of crime, a publick sight
To bleed upon a scaffold?

Ray. Ah! I know not:
His mind may dare the outrage, and his power
He deems above controll.—Can you rely
On your maid's faith and prudence?

Con. What Theresa's?
Most certainly, I think: but why the question?

Ray. He says she was observed at dead of night
In converse with some stranger on the means,
As he would needs infer, of forced escape
Or secret vengeance.

Con. O most false the tale!

Ray. I doubt it not, Constantia: yet 'twill lend
A veil to murder; and, with perjured breath,
There are who will sustain it.

Con. And will you
Bear to behold me, like a guilty thing,
Led through the gazing streets to meet the insult
Of vulgar hate or pity?

Ray. Not if life—

Con. Ha! wilt thou bear to see the curious rabble
Explore weak nature varying in my features
And stealing their fresh colours? wilt thou bear
To see my maiden limbs exposed and stain'd
With the pollution of the hangman's hands?

Ray. Harrow not thus my soul! I'll strain each power
To snatch thee from thy fate:—see it—I'll never.
Con. Well then, take this. [*Gives him a dagger.*
Ray. O horror! what a dagger?
What means the dreadful present?
Con. Means, my Raymond?
To claim from thee the deed which heaven forbids
To my own hand; from thine it will be goodness.
Here is my bosom, Raymond!
Ray. I thy murderer?
Con. My saviour, Raymond! nay, why tremble thus?
I'll welcome the sharp stroke: it will not pain me;
Or it will soon be o'er.
Ray. Thou dost amaze me!
By all our loves, desist: Ramiro's threats
May melt to air.
Con. Cheat not thyself with hope:
He who conceived the thought will never palter
With the fell act: here strike! thy feebleness
Is treason to thy love.
Ray. No—never! never!
The saints, who at the altar heard our vows,
Would cease their intercessions at God's throne
For sinful Raymond, should they see his hands
Stain'd with the blood of her whom he had sworn
To love and to defend.

Con. And not betray:
Raymond, O think of that!
Ray. No more, Constantia!
It must not—cannot be!—let me withdraw
This pointed death; or to the last reserve
The dire expedient. Soon the king will see you:
O soothe him with mild words! calm his fierce soul,
And hold him from despair.
Con. What, wouldst thou have me
Puzzle myself with falsehood, as—
Ray. O no!
Spare me, Constantia! but I'd have thee smooth
And not enrage the storm: let's wait our fortune:
I will be with thee oft: means may be found
To elude the guard; or tumult in the state,
(Even now a ferment labours in its bosom,)
May work our safety: when the last weak hope
Hath wing'd her flight, why then this sharp relief
May be applied; its edge alone, Constantia,
Shall sever thee from me. But see the princess!
My presence might distress her: say that Raymond
Is Leon's friend, and oft has moved the king
For him and her. [*Exit* Raymond.
Con. O my torn heart!—

Enter XIMENA.

Ximena!
Comest thou to see thy wretched friend, and own

Ray. Harrow not thus my soul! I'll strain each power
To snatch thee from thy fate:—see it—I'll never.
Con. Well then, take this. [*Gives him a dagger.*
Ray. O horror! what a dagger?
What means the dreadful present?
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To elude the guard; or tumult in the state,
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May work our safety: when the last weak hope
Hath wing'd her flight, why then this sharp relief
May be applied; its edge alone, Constantia,
Shall sever thee from me. But see the princess!
My presence might distress her: say that Raymond
Is Leon's friend, and oft has moved the king
For him and her. [*Exit* Raymond.
Con. O my torn heart!—

Enter XIMENA.

Ximena!
Comest thou to see thy wretched friend, and own

Thy sorrow less than her's? Thou'st heard my story,
And deem'd it sad; yet when I told it thee
I knew not half its woes.

Xim. Ah, dear Constantia!
Thy fate hath been severe:—but why thy speech
Thus gloom'd with new distress? thou hast not lost
Another hero on thy bridal morn?
Hast not been widow'd twice?

Con. Alas! alas!

Xim. What could have mark'd the hours since we conversed
With such deep woe?

Con. Those hours have been most fateful:
He lives, and yet is lost!

Xim. Lives?

Con. In this palace.

Xim. Amazement! and is false?

Con. His breast, Ximena,
Is truth's bright temple, and the heart that warms it
The heavenly power herself.

Xim. 'Tis wonderful!
O tell me all!

Con. Thou hast my confidence;
And wilt not wrong it.—Raymond then survives!

Xim. Raymond! my brother's Raymond? he your lord,
Whose fate you wept?

Con. Ah! he, my friend.

Xim. But how
Is Raymond lost? my brother's jealousy
Hath not yet found him thine.
Con. No: yet to me
Is he for ever lost!—Ramiro's passion
Dooms me its own, or death's.
Xim. Cruel Ramiro!
Till now I deem'd him stern alone to me,
Not fierce to those he loved. But hear, thou mourner!
And I will give thee comfort: in this hour
I wait my Leon's summons: his bold friends
Are sheathed in arms; and but expect the signal
To bear me from the palace: thou, Constantia,
Shalt be the partner of my flight.
Con. Ximena!
Thou art indeed a friend: but can I leave
My Raymond here to bide the gathering storm,
Which soon must whelm him? No! if I must fall,
His eyes shall see me, and his tongue shall praise me
Great in my fall for him.
Xim. Would you afflict him
With such a dreadful sight? and your escape
Can draw no wrath on him, who is unknown,
But as Ramiro's friend.
Con. Events must soon
Proclaim him for my love; and then my flight
Will make his doom most certain. No, Ximena!

Pursue your brighter fates! May Heaven descend
On you and Leon in a shower of blessings!
And may no thought of poor and lost Constantia
Intrude to taint your happiness! I'm fix'd
To stay—and, if heaven so ordain, to die.
Farewell—for ever!—or if not for ever,—
Why 'twill be well, dear maid!

Xim. 'Tis—'tis too much!
O leave this den of cruelty, Constantia!
Yet, yet relent!

Con. No more, I pray—no more:
You wound my heart. Tell Leon, that my Raymond
Was still his friend, and still besought the king
For him and his Ximena:—tell him too
Of our disastrous loves, and he will drop
The tear of generous pity.

Xim. O, Constantia!
His heart will feel your woes; for he is milder
Than the sweet prime of day. My trembling limbs
Will scarcely bear me from you! [*Exit* Xim.

Con. Generous girl!
Thy presence soften'd me too much: my soul
Must now recall her force. O! these dear features!
[*She takes a picture of* Raymond *from her bosom.*
Let me peruse them!—from their noble lines
I draw more virtue, more impressive fortitude,
Than from the sage's volume:—yet how poor

This copy of my Raymond! where's his eye?
Where that illumination of the soul,
Which throws its lambent glory o'er his face?
Tints cannot live and burn: yet will I love thee;
Yet wear thee on my heart: thou wilt not leave me
Even on the boards of death!—

Enter RAMIRO.

Ha! 'tis Ramiro!

[*As she hastily puts up the picture, it falls on the floor.*

I had forgot. Now let me be myself.

Ram. Well, madam, has my friend prevail'd? his speech
Has fascination in it: mine is plain,
And cannot take like his.

Con. If you are suitor
For what I yet may give you, my respect,
Release me, sir, from this my gaudy prison;
Where love, I must not hear, affronts my sorrows,
And deepens every woe.

Ram. O most ungrateful!
"A prison?" madam! "love you must not hear?"
"Sorrows and woes?" I thought that Raymond's arts,
Confusion on their triumph! [*aside.*] had prepared you
For the soft welcome of more genial feelings.

Con. I know not what you mean: the love, that first
Subdued this bosom, shall for ever keep it,
Unshaken by the terrors of your power.
Kill me you may;—may give an edge to death:
Win me you never can.

Ram. Ye wondering heavens!
See with what awful innocence of look
She covers guilt, and still commands! [*aside.*] 'Tis now
Full late to flaunt this grief: he lives!

Con. What say you?

Ram. O art thou moved? the minion of thy love
Survives!—thou know'st it; and thy tears this morn
Embalm'd the living!

Con. Gracious heaven! [*Aside.*

Ram. Your sorrows
Are now exposed impostors.

Con. We are undone! [*Aside.*

Ram. What! silent, madam? is not female falsehood
Inventive to excuse? I have the secret:
Thy Raymond blabb'd it.

Con. Raymond? sir!

Ram. Yes, Raymond!
On whom at its first glance thy light love fasten'd—

Con. Still are we safe. [*Aside.*

Ram. In mockery of faith;

In proud contempt of vows; those woman's weapons
To foil the credulous.

Con. Ha! this to me?
If the dear object of my virgin passion
Survive—

Ram. Thou know'st he doth.

Con. Say who can charge
Constantia's heart with perfidy or lightness?

Ram. Constantia's deeds can charge it; nay, can prove it
Light as the air, that's wounded by each breath
And yet retains no scar.

Con. I scorn the slander:
It comes not near me.

Ram. Where's thy power, O shame!
To flush the cheek and damp the brow of falsehood,
When thus she looks?—Did not this day behold thee
Even playful with a stranger? see thy hand
The wanton of his lips—nay—and thy kisses
The prey of his bold licence?

Con. Patience, Heaven!
Thy Raymond—thine I'll call him—knew far better,
As advocate for thee, than to caress:
Murder was on his lips, not love!

Ram. O madness!
Could it be false? [*Aside.*

Con. Nay, lead me to my fate,

My choice of deaths your generous love forbids not,
Your scaffold not your bed.

Ram. What thus subdues me? [*Aside.*
Dost thou defy me then?

Con. Thy very slander
To me is innocent: why pauses cruelty?
I am not pale at death. [*Alarm at a distance.*

Ram. What noise was that?

Con. Aye! 'tis for thee to fear: 'tis safer far
To wreak thine insults on a helpless captive,
Than on thy nobles: they may find a way
To just revenge.

Ram. Damnation! art thou leagued
With traitorous ruffians? Ha! what bauble's this,
Which sparkles on my sight? [*Takes up the picture.*

Con. Distressful accident!
Most trying this! [*Aside.*

Ram. By all the fiends of darkness,
False Raymond's counterfeit! down, down to hell,
Vile, curst resemblance! [*dashes it on the floor.*
Innocent?—O guilt!
How durst thou ape the kingly port of virtue
To strut and bluster thus? Who wait without?

Enter Guards.

My scorn, and not my love!

Con. Thy scorn and love
To me are toys alike.

Ram. Here! take and guard her
Down to the prison beneath! yes! she shall bleed,
The ally of rebels. [*Alarm without.*] Hence! away
with her!

Con. On to my cell! 'twill be the brighter
dungeon,
Unsullied by thy love. [*Ex.* Con. *guarded.*

Ram. Speed some of you,
And learn whence that alarm! [*Exe. some of the guard.*]—Go thou, and summon
Lord Raymond to our presence! [*Ex.* Attendant.]
I must wake;
And show this traitor friend the power of him,
Whose love he holds thus vile.—My friend! my
mistress!
Where are they now? distraction! friend! and mistress!
How harsh sound names, by nature form'd to please
With sweetest melody! be it so!—Revenge!
Come, and be thou the fiend to fill my bosom
With blackest inspiration! make me apt
For ruthless deeds! and teach me from their terror
To drink pernicious joy!

Enter RAYMOND.

O thou art come!
Guards wait without. [*Exe.* Guards.] Ha! thou unrivall'd friend!

Raymond! the fair one? is she still unmoved?
Yet to concession steeled?—O thy false deed!
It swells within my heart.

Ray. Didst thou not promise
No more to wound me with thy jealous madness?
I cannot mould her will.

Ram. Too well thou canst:
Thy own indeed thou canst not mould to honour.
Know'st thou this plaything of her love?
[*Showing the picture.*

Ray. Just Heavens!
My picture! [*Aside.*

Ram. This is right! a guilty heart
Should throw its fetters on the tongue. Guards!
take him! [*Re-enter* Guards.
The trivial object of thy mean seduction
Is safe already.

Ray. Nay my sword shall speak
Against the inhospitable act. [*Draws.*

Ram. Disarm!
And force him off!
[Guards *rush in and disarm him.*

Ray. Coward! I gave thee life.

Ram. 'Tis true: but thou hast dash'd the life
thou gavest me
With so much bitterness, 'tis worse than death.

Ray. Constantia's innocent: she is—

Ram. To chains with him!
[*Alarm without.* Guards *force off* Ray.
That noise again?

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My liege, lord Leon's risen
With a strong band of friends.
Ram. Summon my guards!
I'll meet him brow to brow.
Mess. The queen and princess, sire,
Are fled to join him.
Ram. Ulcers waste thy tongue
For its ill notes!

Enter second Messenger.

2 *Mess.* The citizens, my lord,
Are up in arms, and, fill'd with daring outrage,
Threaten the palace gates.
Ram. Ravens! and bandogs!—
Join heaven and hell to blast them! Let the world
Rise up in arms, I now can brave the conflict.
Hence! guard the prisoners well! [*Exe.* Guard *and* Mess.] This tumult's nothing!
The fiercer insurrection's in my mind:
The man within through all his powers is shaken.
War! pestilence! and earthquake! what are ye

But feeble weapons of the avenging God?
When he would plague us most, his chosen instrument
Is a friend's baseness.—Juan here again?
Comes he to aid, compassionate, or taunt me?
His aspect bears no insult.

Enter JUAN.

Juan. Give me, my brother,
My share of all your injuries!
Ram. My Juan!
If by my fates I am left a friend, 'tis thou!
That specious form, I fondly took for truth,
Thy glance distinguish'd:—'twas a rainbow tint,
Which faded from the touch.
Juan. Aye, now indeed
You know this Raymond!
Ram. Speak the name no more!
'Tis sickness to my ear.
Juan. Hath he received
His perfidy's just recompence?
Ram. In chains
He waits his doom.
Juan. Why lingers it an hour?
In these uncertain times some chance may catch
The long-descending blow, and save the traitor
To cheat and mock you twice.

Ram. That shall he not.
Here take this ring, my warrant to dispatch him,
Not even a prayer allow'd.
Juan. I will.
Ram. Yet stay.
Shall the fair tempter of his faith survive?
'Tis just she die.
Juan. Hast thou then quaff'd her sweets,
And now art cloy'd?
Ram. No: by yon heavenly fires!
For me her bed is virgin.
Juan. Wouldst thou send her,
In maiden white, to laugh in the next world
At thy forbearance?—no:—be wise!—with vengeance
Blend softer pleasure: know'st thou what I mean?
She's in thy power.
Ram. Ha! thou'st roused one devil
More than I thought possess'd me: yes, I will—
[*Alarm without.*
But hark! the tumult swells.
Juan. O think not of it!
Give me your guards: I'll rush against the rebels,
And make them rue their treason.
Ram. Best of friends—
Juan. Nay—nay no more of that, the times won't bear it.
I'll fight against thy foes: and now, my brother,

Be it mine in war to triumph, thine in love.
Away, away! [*Exit.*

Ram. Thou hast deceived me, Juan!
By day and night! I knew not that thy breast
Burnt with this ardent soul. I'll live to thank thee.
And now — ha! now — what gulfs of deep'ning crime
Gape to devour me? violation! murder!
Ha! my heart trembles: the black forms appal me!
I will not meet them. Juan! — no — I'll lead
My troops: Juan! I say! What then? shall Raymond
Enjoy the spoils of his perfidious triumph
Over my easy faith? that stings to madness:
Rather let hell with all its floods of fire
Burst on my head! and what is she? the idol
Of my weak fancy; form without the god!
Is she not wanton as the wind that kisses
The general lip? — Respect for thee! this dagger
Shall force thy harlot bed, or drain thy heart: —
Perhaps do both! — From birth to death man's course
Is quickly run; from darkness to deep darkness
Unfathom'd by conjecture: this bright point
Of life is all we own. — Fate, take the future!
The present hour be mine! [*Exit* Ram.

Enter JUAN *listening, with* VELASQUEZ.

Juan. At length he is gone.
Poor craven soul, to start at bugbears thus!
But soon he'll wake to more authentick fears.
He thinks me with the troops; and there I will be,
Though not in arms for him: while then I turn
To range my harmless war, do thou, Velasquez,
Through yonder passage, which with secret windings
Pervades the palace, haste, and say to Leon,
If he will give my regal claims his suffrage,
The eastern gate shall open at his summons,
And welcome all his host.

Vel. 'Tis well, my lord:
But should the guard surprise me?

Juan. Here's my warrant
To bear thee above question. To Aveiro
Say, that, with sovereignty, I court the power
Of raising him and his. Wherefore this pause?
The time brooks no delay: begone!

Vel. My lord!

Juan. Why parley now?

Vel. My useful services
Have long, my lord, been your's; the hour is come
Which should requite them richly.

Juan. And it shall.
Waste not an instant now.

Vel. But good my lord!
Juan. What! dost thou doubt me?
Vel. No: but yet 'twere well
To fix due bounds to vagrant expectation,
And bid me more than hope.
Juan. Well, then, Velasquez,
What wouldst thou ask?
Vel. Your oath's most sacred bond,
To give me, when you're seated on the throne,
The lord Aranda's honours and estates,
Now forfeit to the law.
Juan. Ha! well—we'll think on't—
'Tis lofty game, Velasquez! trust my bounty.
Now go: the occasion presses.
Vel. Yes, I'll go!—
But thou mayst wish I had not. Have I found thee?
They all shall know thee too. [*aside.*] [*Exit* Vel.
Juan. What is't thou sayst?
But 'tis no matter.—To my wish the mischief
Spreads in dark majesty. This Norman favourite,
Hath reign'd his hour; and now is on the ground,
Fallen, fallen to rise no more! Light friendship's bubble,
Beneath my finger and a female's eye,
Hath burst with mighty noise. Alonzo, Leon,
Mad with their wrongs, have levied all their war;
And that fierce monster, the still changeful rabble
Waves its hard hands, and opens its rank mouths

To wage my battles! Can I ask for more?
Yes, more remains; and I have yet to play
A part of subtle conduct ere the game
Be wholly mine;—ere to the admiring world
Juan can break in royalty's full blaze. [*Exit* Juan.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE, A DUNGEON.

CONSTANTIA *discovered asleep in one end of it.*

RAMIRO [*without.*]

GUARD! wait at distance: on your life! let no one
Enter; and whatso'er you hear, approach not.
I must be to myself.—[*Enters with a taper.*]—How's this? when rushing
To vengeance and delight, wherefore this pulse
Which beats as it would rend my breast? these drops
Which dew and chill my limbs? this foot of stealth
Which trembles at its own light fall, and pauses
Like the pale murderer's? and—ha! what was that?
Hark! all is mute as death! Now troubled ghosts
Walk the dun air; and sure some viewless demon
Hovers in this gloom, and loads it with strange horror
For my confusion: list again!—'twas only
The wind that groan'd along the mazy vault
Which leads to this deep prison.—[*Advances to Con.*] There she lies:
Asleep, by heavens! unconscious of the wretchedness
Of this ill lodging, or the doom that threats her!
Can guilt look thus? a cherub smile sits playful

And dimpling in her cheek! O could I change
These horrid vigils of distemper'd passion
For her calm slumbers! am I come to break them,
And rouse her into agony! no—sooner
[*drawing his dagger.*
Let this conclude my life and crimes together.
Yet, yet—but soft—she moves: her lips unclose,
To breathe sweet accents.

Con. [*asleep*] Raymond! O! my Raymond!

Ram. Hell catch the hateful sound!

Con. Here rest, my love!
The tyrant cannot touch thee!—safe, safe, dear!
Within these arms.

Ram. [*raising his dagger*] Harlot, thou liest! this stroke
Shall find him in thy wanton heart! [*going to strike*] so—[*lets fall the dagger*]—ha!
She wakes!

Con. [*awaking*] What fiend of darkness thus hath stolen
On this dead hour to rob it of sleep's blessing,
That drops on anguish'd nature? Speak! who?—whence?—
The executioner?

Ram. No, wretch! 'tis I.

Con. Ha! terror could not take another shape
To fright me thus. What is thine errand here?
To see my life's last struggle?

Ram. No.

Con. Declare
Thy dreadful purpose. By the flames that flash
From thy wild eyes; by the dumb rage, that sickens
On thy blanch'd cheek and quivers on thy lip,
Thou comest not here for charity or peace!
Speak thy intents!

Ram. They are not now to crouch
For favours lavish'd on that faithless slave
I once call'd friend! no—I come here to—

Con. Sheath
Thy poniard in my bosom: is it not so?
Be merciful and quick.

Ram. Thou need'st not chide
The stroke of justice and revenge as tardy;
'Twill fall full soon: but first I'll make my own
The joys within my grasp.

Con. Thou canst not mean—

Ram. To force thee! yes, by all the powers that give thee
To my strong hand! my passion—

Con. False! thou darest not
Attempt an act which would for ever brand thee
Villain and coward too! which would degrade thee
From royalty and manhood to a brute!
Would mark thee for the scorn and curse of earth,
And the stern vengeance of offended heaven!

Ram. Rave on! thy charms are quicken'd by thy rage.
Proceed!

Con. Insulting! saidst thou not my life
Was forfeit to thy laws? let then those laws
Assert their prey: arrange thy lies against me;
I will not speak to dash them; or perplex
The hireling judge, as he proclaims thy sentence
And yields me to the axe.

Ram. 'Tis now too late:
Thou shalt not fall so nobly.

Con. In this dungeon
Then let me meet my death; from thee perhaps
I have deserved it: have I not despised thee?
Defective power alone may haply keep
My hands from thy base life: then strike! and justice
Will own the fact of blood.

Ram. The blow shall follow:
It shall but linger till my passion loaths
Possession's feast; and then, for all my injuries,
The fatal poniard shall extend thee here
A violated corse: while stretch'd beside thee,
Thy bleeding paramour shall yield thy name
To lasting infamy.

Con. Ah! Raymond!

Ram. Impudence!
Avow thy shameless love! then thus— [*Seizes her.*

Con. O heavens!
Help! save the virtue that you love!

Ram. Speak loudly!
And heaven perhaps may hear! this vaulted rock,

Buried in night, is safe from man's intrusion,
And mocks his audience: not a shriek's faint echo
Can reach the ear of day.

Con. [*kneels*] O, sir! thus low
I fall—a suppliant for death's poignant mercy
To snatch me from dishonour,—to preserve
This mortal temple, which the Lord of Life
Once deign'd to fill, from sacrilegious stain.
Ah! yet bethink thee!—for one sickly joy,
Which dies upon the taste, what dire infliction
Will madden thy pale days and ghastly nights
With ceaseless anguish! Oh! thou'lt deeply curse
The fraud of passion that could urge a crime
To which even murder's fair!

Ram. I must not hear thee:
The time commands to act, and not to talk—
Thus then—[*struggling with her.*]—resistance is in vain—[*the* Ghost *of his Father rises.*]
Ha! Hell!—
What can it mean? why dread and threat'ning thus
Break'st thou from darkness to confound my nature,
And fix my rigid blood?—Speak!—speak!—thy breath
May blast me; but I dare it.—Ha! those eyes
Will stare me into stone! If thou beest he,
Whose form thou hast, speak to thy trembling son!
O! whence this visitation, passing thought,

To scare me from my joys? 'Tis gone! the phantasy
[Ghost *vanishes*.
Of weakness or disease: and now—
[*returning to* Con.
Con. O think!
These are the first weak workings of thy guilt;
Poor harbingers of those avenging terrors,
That will pursue the deed.
Ram. Let hell send forth
All its black legions, it shall never save thee
From—[Ghost *rises again, and points in a menacing manner to* Ram. *and* Con.]
Madness! cursed, foul, night-born spectre, hence!
Thou art not what thou seem'st! off to the deep!
Nor bind my powers in chains of adamant
With impious fascination! Ha! why point
At her—or wherefore throws thine eye at me
Its pale disastrous glare?
Ghost. O most unhappy!
War not against the Eternal! By his will
I leave my bed of horror in the abyss
To give thy phrensy pause. Refrain! though black
Thou know'st to be the crime thou hast conceived,
Yet is it blacker far! peculiar darkness
Waits to confound it, and damnation deep
Even in damnation! Oh! it moves all hell
To rise and meet it! Ere the day-star flame
Upon the Indian ridge, thou shalt be cold

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To rise and meet it! Ere the day-star flame
Upon the Indian ridge, thou shalt be cold

And weak as I; and, if repentance turn not
The uplifted vengeance, thou shalt sink to horrors
Beyond the glimpses of embodied thought.
Desist! repent! beware! [Ghost *vanishes.*

Ram. [*after a pause.*] 'Tis well! I thank thee!
Most strange!—my purpose is appall'd: some death
Hath seized upon my heart with icy gripe!
But for my life—why let it go!—'tis better
To be the worst, than dread it; wild imaginings
Will madden, and I'll end them.—[*Noise without.*]
Ha! those sounds
Are of this world.

Ray. [*without.*] Yield or receive thy fate!
Die—then!

Guard. Oh!

Ram. Earth joins with Erebus
To cross me; but my arm is strong to meet
A mortal foe: or some kind sword will rid me
Of what were better gone.—

Enter RAYMOND.

Illusion! Raymond!
Juan! thou hast been false.

Ray. As murder's minister
He was most true; as all beside most false.
He can plan crimes no more.

Ram. Thou comest perhaps

Too soon: but thus I'll welcome thee—[*draws and runs at* Ray.] Die, villain!

Ray. 'Tis then no time for words. [*Fight.*

Con. O save him! save him!
I feel strange fever here! [*strikes her forehead.*]—
They burn! they flame!
'Tis all red conflagration!

Ray. Heaven avows
My righteous cause—[*disarms* Ram.]—thus—but, as yet thy thought
Alone is stain'd with bloodshed, take thy life!
This second time my gift.

Ram. Presumptuous man!
Though weak to punish thee, this hand can rescue me
From thy proud mercy—[*snatches the dagger from the ground, and before* Ray. *can seize his arm, stabs himself.*]

Ray. Whence this dire despair?
Without there! help!—

Enter Attendants.

I ask but for my own!
Let my Constantia, let my bride—

Ram. Thy bride?

Ray. Yes, sir, my bride: before I saw Ramiro
Our vows had seal'd our loves: let her be safe,
And mine,—be thine the world!

Ram. Had this been earlier,—
But now 'tis horror all!

Ray. Convey him softly
To his own couch: the steel perhaps hath miss'd
The seat of life.

Ram. O cruel! envy not
A wretch, the death he courts. [*Exit borne off.*

Ray. O my Constantia!
Thou hast drunk deep of horrors! haste thee hence!
Ha! why that look of wildness? speak, my fair one!
To thy own Raymond speak!

Con. Ha! ha! ha!
There is a God that sees! where have ye laid him?
Nay not so close, I pray. Unhand me, ruffian!
Why stare you thus?

Ray. O sweet! it is thy Raymond!
No danger's near thee: love alone is here,
And waves thee to delight.

Con. How pale he looks!
And bloody!—'tis a foul world! O lay him not
By my cold side! scandal will tell strange tales
Of such a bedfellow! why what care I?
These roses are most sweet: this beauteous garden
Is broider'd with rich flowers. Off! I will weave
A chaplet for his brows! yes! yes! young seraphs
Wear garlands on their starry looks; and India
Shall yield him all her fragrance.

Ray. Woe! woe! woe!
Of life's dread woes the worst!

Enter XIMENA.

Xim. Where? where's my friend?
Is this the place my brother's cruelty
Appoints for lovely innocence? it chills me!
I scarcely dare to enter it. Where is she?

Ray. Dear princess! here: but not like what she was.
The dreadful scene hath rush'd upon her brain,
And troubled its clear thought.

Xim. We meet, Constantia!
But is it thus we meet? you frighten me
With that strange look!

Con. Ha! ha! ha! 'tis fine!
The breeze is soft and sweet; from Araby
They say such perfumes breathe. O hide that sun!
It wounds my aching sight! Ha! wretch, forbear!
It is thy father's ghost! dark Tartarus
Hath tortures for such crimes.

Xim. Most terrifying!
I dare not stay.—

Enter LEON.

My Leon, art thou come?
I thought thou wouldst be here.

Leon. O noble Raymond!
I know thy worth; and much I joy, my rescue
Came timely for thy safety. Where's Ramiro?

Ray. Leon, I found him here,—wan, haggard, fierce,
His wild soul in his face: he flew on me,
But soon I gain'd his sword; when, in disdain
Of offer'd life, he seized and aim'd a dagger
Full at his heart.

Leon. And fell?—where lies he now?

Ray. Moved to his chamber; and the wound appear'd
Not to reach life.

Leon. That's well: but why thus linger
In this cursed dungeon? its foul damps, Ximena!
Will strike and blight thee, dear.—Is that thy friend?

Xim. Lost to herself and us.

Ray. O lend me, sir,
Your eyes to weep! ah, see!

Leon. Take patience, sir!

Ray. Patience? and witness this sweet harmony
Broken into horrid discords!

Con. Yes! yes! I see it!
That is his galley—all her silken bravery
Floats in the air! I'll ride on the curl'd billows
To meet him! now I mount: the clouds are black
Beneath my feet: this car of pearl is easy:
That misty spot is Spain: there!—there is Sicily!
How small it looks! and yet it glows—it basks
In the full day! there have I walk'd with him;
And listen'd to his voice, more tuneful far

Than the sweet songstress's that woos the night.
Was he not in these arms? where is he now?
Yon fiend has thrown him to the winds! Oh! Oh!

Ray. That smote upon my heart!

Leon. Ah! why delay
To bear her from these horrors? but do thou
Awhile conceal thee; for the excited people
Rave for their Juan's fall, and breathe revenge
On thee, his deathsman.

Ray. Had the deed been mine,
To heaven and earth I would maintain it just.

Leon. Most just indeed it was: but O withdraw!
I'll haste to stem their rage.

Ray. Let it bear on!
I now am past its terrors: my wrung heart
Dreads not a heighten'd pang; and, were it rent,
Would yield its last poor drop without a struggle.

Leon. Be patient, and retire! I'll hence: Ximena
Will watch her troubled friend: repose may yet
Restore her wandering sense. [*Exit* Leon.

Ray. Heavens! that it would!
Come then, my fair! ah! do not struggle thus.
Look on me! 'tis thy love!

Con. Off! Off! distraction!
Am I the slave of force? angels, they say,
Have bodies made of sunbeams: would I were one!
Then could I bear no stain.

Ray. Ha! what a thought

That roused to stab my peace!—no more of that—
'Tis tenfold madness! Quick, my sweet! ah! quick
Leave this abhorred place!

Con. No—never! never!
My will is free: nay, I don't rave! my soul
Shall still deride thee. O! I die to pluck
Those spreading palms, that flame with golden fruit;
And bathe and whiten from the soil of earth
In yon soft streams of milk! Come! come away.
Hark! there he howls below!—If I can burst
This slender cord, I'm free and safe!—haste! haste!
haste!

As Ray. *and* Xim. *are leading off* Con. *enter* Officer *and* Guards, *who seize* Ray. *and* Con.

Ray. Ha! whence this violence?

Off. Thou bloody stranger!
Thy course is run! our murder'd prince and sovereign
Demand thy life and her's.

Ray. My deeds I'll justify
Before the appointed judge: but she is pure
From any stain of blood, however spilt:
Then be she free, and bear me to my fate.

Off. On her as thee, our warrant is most strict:
She taught thy sword to murder.

Xim. Hence! why this?
Know ye not me?

Off. The princess.

Xim. Leon's consort.
Touch not my friends! retire!

Off. We dare not, madam!
The orders of the queen admit not question!
We must obey.

Xim. The queen? O pause a moment!
But till I fly, and on my knees obtain
A sentence less unjust.

Off. Forgive us, madam!
We were enjoin'd to speed. Convey the prisoners
Each to a separate cell.

[*Exeunt* Guards *with* Ray. *and* Con.

Xim. Most cruel men!
But long ye shall not triumph, if my prayers
Or Leon's power can save the innocent. [*Exit* Xim.

SCENE, AN APARTMENT IN THE PALACE.

Queen. [*entering.*] My ear claims respite from the stern alarms
Which frighten matron night: here it may find it.
Ah! me, most wretched! doom'd by lengthen'd life
To see new births of woe! Why did I lend
Myself to this sad war? but without me
It would have raged; and now the power of vengeance
Rests in my hand: and I will wield it so

That my poor murder'd sons shall feel delight
Even in their ruin'd state. Ah! rash Ramiro!
In strong infringement of the Eternal's law,
To rush on self-destruction, and all crimson'd
With thy own blood, to burst into the presence
Of blazing Deity! but they who urged thee
To the mad deed have surely heavier guilt,
And they shall bleed for it!—

Enter XIMENA *hastily.*

Ximena! wretchedness
Indeed surrounds us: but thy wild affliction
Calls for my wonder.

Xim. O your pardon, madam,
For my poor friend!

Queen. Thy friend?

Xim. O! such distress
As I have witness'd, madam, would make fountains
Of the most flinty eyes!

Queen. Where, child?

Xim. Beneath
Where a black dungeon yawns.

Queen. Grief there, and horror
Inhabit!

Xim. And oh! there—but quick recall,
If you have love for me, the dreadful order
That sever'd Raymond from the sad Constantia,

That loaded them with chains, and threats their lives!

Queen. Girl, name them not! the guilty pair must expiate
Their crimes with blood!

Xim. Alas! can she have crimes?
'Twas her's alone to suffer: her stern fate
Has forced her sense to frightful ecstasy!
O she is wild as winter seas!

Queen. Mere practice,
To cheat thee of thy foolish pity, child!
In guile she's veteran: with her well-feign'd woes
She trick'd me into tears, and then her arts
Robb'd me of both my sons.

Xim. Constantia's arts?

Queen. Her's, child: they drew Ramiro from his virtue;
They arm'd and lifted this fierce Norman's hand
Against thy brothers lives.

Xim. Fell they not justly?

Queen. That must be proved: or were it so, it should
But swell our anguish for their fate. The soul
That parts in peace from earth may chide our grief
As weak, nay impious; but the wretch that's swept
In the fierce outrage of his guilt to judgment,
There at the throne of God to curse the hand
Which form'd him an immortal,—loudly calls

For our full gush of woe; and every eye
Of all his race, fast streaming for his doom,
Would shed no idle drop! Alas! poor Juan!
Alas! undone Ramiro!—but your mother
Lives to revenge your fall!

Xim. O dreadful! yet
Let your revenge have eyes, nor strike the guiltless.
Nature commands to guard the life she gave,
And Raymond but obey'd her:—for Constantia,
Her crime has been to please:—Ramiro too
Survives, and still may live.

Queen. O would he might!
His crimes were outbreaks only, and his nature
Has worth to save herself: his boundless love
Of a false friend, and passion for a woman,
Fraudful not less than beautiful, have murder'd him
With his sad brother.—Cease to move me, girl!
Thy tears are traitors to thy race.—Who waits?

Enter Servant.

Quick to Alfarez; bid him guard his charge
With jealous circumspection, and to-morrow
Bring them to their dread audit. [*Exit* Servant.

Xim. [*kneeling.*] Let my knees,
Ne'er bent before to aid so just a suit,
Yet gain Constantia's life!

Queen. Another word for her,
And thou art none of mine.

Xim. My Leon knows

Her's and her Raymond's innocence; and he
Will move his power to save them.

Queen. Leon's power?
What can it do? perverse and peevish girl!
I join'd my force with his, 'tis true, to guard
The vows, my will had sanction'd, from infraction,
And snatch thee from this alien: but I meant not
To make thy lord my king, and bow before him!
Know that the guards are mine: misled by Juan,
They left awhile their monarch bare to danger;
Yet, firm in their allegiance, soon they rallied
Round their lost sovereign's parent, and with her
Avow one cause of vengeance. Since you hint
Your Leon's power, your friends! unnatural girl!
Shall fall by a quick blow.—Release me! hence
I go to seal their doom.

Xim. O yet show mercy!
O spare these wounding words!

Queen. A mother rages
For her lost sons; and thou, who never felt'st
That severing of the heart which mothers feel,
When the dear offspring of their travail perish,
May'st now not pity me!—Her Leon's power!
I must be firm and sudden! [*Aside. Exit.*

Xim. Cruel mother!
Ah! where hath slept this sternness of thy nature
For many a smiling year, which saw thee fondle me
With arms of down, and scarcely bend thy brow

To chide a folly of my giddy childhood?
Blest heaven! that such a steely heart should lodge
Within a woman's breast! yet is her cause
Of power to wound: her cause? 'tis also mine:
Are not her sons my brothers? till the morn,
That, robed in inauspicious light, advanced
To hail his wish'd return, has not Ramiro
Most largely satisfied my claims of love?
Yet for his fate I feel, I know not how,
Far lighter anguish than for thine, Constantia!
Condemn'd to perish in a foreign land
For ills from others guilt.—But Leon yet
May save thee!

As she is going off the stage, enter Off. *and* Guards, *leading* Con. *chained, with her hair dishevelled, and her eyes depressed and languid.*

What a sight! [*to the* Off.] Ah! whither lead you
This innocent fair mourner? let my prayer
Suspend your steps awhile.

Off. Most gracious princess,
The queen exacts our haste: when we deny you
'Tis duty speaks, not will.

Xim. She knows me not:
Her eyes still wander, reft of their sweet sense.
Inhuman! to withhold from the sick brain
Sleep's healing medicine.

Off. That we would not, madam.
When in our arms she sank, quite spent, in slumber
Profound as death, we shrank from strict obedience,
And bore her to her maids, who softly placed her,
While our guard kept the door, on her own bed;
And there she rested, 'till a second order
Forced us reluctantly to tear her thence
To meet the fatal stroke.

Xim. [*springing to her, and embracing her.*] Constantia? never!
These arms shall save thee!

Con. [*awaking as from a trance.*] Whence is this? Ramiro?
Ha! were not all strange phantasm, I would call thee
That kind, dear maid, Ximena.

Xim. Yes, yes!—she—
Look on me well! feel my heart beat to thine!
See my cheeks wet with sorrows for thy fate!
Know me for thy Ximena!

Con. Ah! where am I?
Like a poor shipwreck'd mariner, I pant
Upon an unknown coast! ah me! Ximena,
If thou indeed be she, the good, the gentle,
I've dreamt of horrors which have quite subdued me,—
Of dungeons, murder, rape, and the deep gulph
Of night burst open! Breathe I yet the day?
Am I yet safe?

Off. [*separating them.*] Forgive us, princely lady!
We must no more delay.

Con. Release me, sirs!
Ah, wretch! I now remember, though but faintly,
Something of these sad bonds. It was my choice;
Fulfill your tyrant's pleasure, and I'll thank him
For the best death he gives.

Xim. Lo! still she raves!
Forbear till she is calm.

Off. We dare not, madam!
We've been remiss. [*to the guard.*] Pass on!

Xim. [*interposing, and embracing* Con.] Ye shall not, monsters!
Or ye shall trample on the mangled limbs
Of Leon's bride!

Con. Cease, friend! your aid avails not.
The vision of my mind is now most clear:
Lead where you will. [*to* Xim.] O think of me—to Raymond,
If he yet live!—O dreadful! if—

Enter Queen, *who, running to* Con. *bares her arm.*

Queen. My child! my child!
Off with these chains! thanks, Heaven! that wouldst not suffer
My own dire deed to rob me of a daughter!
O my dear, dear Elvira!

Con. [*disengaging herself.*] Is it thus?
Am I your laughter? Insult to the wretched
Is guiltier cruelty.
Queen. No! witness heaven!
Thou art my own Elvira!—long, long lost;
But now for ever mine.
Con. Illusion! mockery!
My mother was Cleone, and my sire
Manfredi, whom Palermo honour'd once
With her first peers, but now, from earth retired,
They see not the fond object of their love
The victim of your wrongs.
Queen. O cease to doubt me!
Palermo's thou art not:—that from these veins
Flow'd thy first life; that thou art she whose birth
Caused me so many woes, whose absence more,—
This ring, which with thy precious self I gave
To Leonela as my pledge of love;
This paper sullied with the tears, that gush'd
At our sad parting, and this starlike mole
Which blushes on thine arm —would loudly speak,
Even were Cleone silent.
Con. Ha! Cleone?
Silent she is indeed! I saw the billows
Ride in dread triumph o'er her head, and mock
My agonizing love!
Queen. Good Heaven preserved her
To save my child: her friends with timely zeal
Redeem'd her from the deep.

Con. Redeem'd her? whom?
Cleone? is she here? O! let me fly
To hang upon her neck, and from her lips
Hear what confounds me now.
Queen. Dear, calm thy spirits!
And I will speak what now may most avail
To ease thy labouring thought. In this same hour,
Just as, impell'd by some revengeful demon,
My lips had breathed a dire command for blood,
A female, veil'd in black, with frantick wildness
Burst on me, and, quick reaching to my hand
This well-known sapphire, sculptured as thou seest
With the blest head of Jesus crown'd with thorns,
Told me how, wreck'd by tempests on her course
To Pisa, Leonela reach'd Palermo
On a frail raft with thee her precious burden;
How there she found beneath Cleone's roof
Friendship to cherish her afflicted state,
And snatch her from her wants; how soon she died
By a fierce fever, the disastrous offspring
Of toils beyond her strength; how, in a moment
Of transient reason ere her eyes for ever
Closed on the sun, she gave thee, with this gem
And a rich casket, to Cleone's love,
Who took thee to her breast, and, from a daughter
Whose loss she wept, to make thee more her own
Call'd thee Constantia.
Elv. Ha! it may be so!

But doubts and fears still cloud me: would Cleone,
Whose soul was honour, thus withhold the child
From your defrauded love?

Queen. She knew not, dear!
That thou wast mine: the rapid malady
Outran the fatal secret ere it faltered
From Leonela's lips; or haply prudence,
Still dreading the far-reaching arms of power,
Might hold her from disclosure: all she did
Was to implore Cleone, should my woes
Cease ere my life, to bear to me this gem,
With the unopen'd casket, which would teem
With truths of wondrous import.

Elv. And that paper?

Queen. Stampt with the story of thy birth, I drew it
This instant from the casket.

Elv. O! 'tis certain!
But where's Cleone, madam? were she snatch'd
From the cold arms of ocean, which embraced her,
How learnt she to pursue her lost Constantia
To Saragossa's palace? or why lingers she
To cheer me with her presence?

Queen. My fond haste
Prevented her, my child! she would not shock you
With her sad weeds; but soon she will be here,
Dress'd for the glad occasion. When, recall'd
To life, she saw 'twas vain to chase the foe,
Who now with sails that wooed the favouring winds

Rush'd swiftly from her view, with backward course
Sorrowing she sought Palermo: but new woes
There waited her return; for raging Tancred,
Grieved for his son, and jealous of the nuptials,
Had seized her whole possessions, and proscribed
Her person too: thence then she fled disguised
In the first bark that sail'd, and hither came,
Through dangers and delays, at last to execute
The trust of Leonela; and to ask
My power to free thee from those barbarous shackles
With which she deem'd thee crush'd. Late with the night
She gain'd our city; and, thy name and fortunes
Soon reaching her struck ear, she rush'd to check
My vengeance ere it murder'd.

Elv. Where is Raymond?

Queen. That's true:—haste! [*to the* Off.] set him free, and guide him hither. [*Exit* Off.

Elv. Speak! is he safe? his life was menaced too:
No power shall part our fates.

Queen. 'Twill all be well.
And see! she's here to ratify my truth.

Enter CLEONE.—ELVIRA *runs to her, and embraces her.*

Elv. Cleone! O what power for me too good
Sends thee to bless me thus?

Cleo. This love to me?

Who for a royal mother thus have given thee
My poor and worthless self?
Elv. You mock me surely!
But heaven could ne'er indulge me with a parent
More dear than my Cleone; or a country
More loved than Sicily.
Cleo. Sweet maid, forgive me!
And thus I yield thee to thy proper mother.
[*leading her to the* Queen.
Here kneel: no more Cleone's or Constantia,
But Arragon's Elvira!
Elv. [*kneeling.*] Madam, thus
My tardy knee claims blessing, and forgiveness
If I have err'd.
Queen. Both, both be thine, my child!
[*taking her up and embracing her.*
Yes! thou art truly mine.—Ximena, take
Thy sister to thy heart.
Xim. She still has had from me
More than a sister's love without the name.
Come my Elvira! now. [*embracing* Elv.
Elv. Ximena! sister!
But ah! my bliss is unconfirm'd and trembling!
Where is my consort? shall I not present
For your rich blessing too my virgin choice,
(Had you been there your voice had hallow'd it,)
My Raymond, madam? of a princely strain,
His worth leaves rank behind.

Queen. I know it all.
As thine he shall be safe; though haply, yet
Unreconciled to some sad scenes, my nature
May feel his presence painful.—He's not slow!

Enter RAYMOND.

Ray. Great Sovereign! thanks!—Constantia!
thus to see you,
Restored to light and liberty and health,
Gives me a joy more sprightly and sincere
Than childhood ever knew! Cleone here?
O! thus and thus I welcome thee! [*embracing* Cleo.]
nor stay
To ask thee how is this? but the time seems
To teem with prodigies!
Elv. It does, my Raymond!
And more must strike you now: our union still
Expects a parent's sanction, and this lady
Alone has power to grant it.
Ray. Heavens! what's this?
Elv. 'Tis certain; and Cleone's truth will soon
Engage your faith for it: but let Elvira
Now lead you for her royal mother's blessing.
Dear madam, give it!
Queen. Yes! for thee I'll quell
The strong commotion of a parent's spirit,
And take the hand by which my sons have perish'd.

Ray. Ah! madam, in a woe of your's my will
Has had no part: my hand is also pure
Of blood derived from you.
Queen. Ha! think of Juan,
And of thy fatal sword!
Ray. By me he fell not.
Queen. Fame then has wrong'd you, prince.
Ray. I strove to save him:
But Heaven will'd otherwise. For poor Ramiro,
Hurried by erring passions into guilt,
I grieve as you: though urged beyond my nature
By my love's danger, I disarm'd him only,
And ran to intercept the stroke which robb'd us
Of son and friend.
Queen. O! I believe you, sir!
And as a son thus take you to my arms.
May you be happy!—if my joys should seem
Less than Elvira's or your own, O! think it
The doom alone severe of human bliss
To weep amid its smiles! this hour, thou seest,
Which gives me what for twenty years my soul
Hath gasp'd for as for life's best draught, holds to me
A cup indeed which sparkles, yet is tainted
With drops of scorpion-venom.
Ray. Royal lady!
Your grief, which all must share, defrauds the day
Of half its destined light.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Gonsalvo, madam,
Deputed lately by the king to Sicily,
Commends him to your majesty.

Queen. Where is he?

Mess. Just landed, madam: he dispatch'd me hither
In haste with these. [*presenting letters to the* Queen.]
Some nobles from Palermo
Attend him to their prince.

Queen. Withdraw! [*Exit* Mess.] These papers
Are for the princely Raymond. [*giving the letters to* Ray.] Ah! their business
Bears a sharp touch, I fear!

Ray. Most sharp, dear madam!
Struck with my fancied fate, the royal Tancred
Li[illegible] not to see Gonsalvo; and Palermo
Has hither sent the chosen of her senate
To lead me to the throne: but on the throne
A sense of loss will pain me.

Elv. My Cleone!
The hour is come for me to pay thy love
With rich though failing recompence: now throw
Misfortunes from thy thought!

Cleo. O my Constantia!
Thus let me call you on Palermo's throne,
While at the endearing name a thousand, thousand

Sweet recollections live! my bliss is strong,
Nor dreads a second fall!

Queen. [*to* Xim.] Where's Leon, child?
He should partake thy joy.

Xim. When he had still'd
The tempest of the people, as I heard,
He sought the chamber of my hapless brother,
To aid him, and deplore the ills we suffer
From fortune's enmity: and see! he comes—
And in his generous office.

Back Scene opens, and discovers LEON *supporting* RAM. *and leading him forward.* Attendants.

Leon. By Heaven's truth!
I never sought, my lord, your life or crown!

Ram. I do believe it, Leon! I have wrong'd thee:
My heart hath dropt its pride; and I can sue to thee
For pardon, Leon!

Leon. O forbear, my liege!
It is too much!

Ram. No—not a whit—most just.
My spirits ebb apace: life floats before me
In fearful vision: all its spells are vanish'd,
Which cheated me to ruin.—On! yet onward
Support me, friends! I thank you!—Heard I not
That Juan fell?

Leon. Yes, sire! an injured servant

Divulged his dark and various plans of treason,
To you—to me—to all—even to Constantia,
Whose maid he lured to some rash conferences
With gold and hopes of flight.

Ram. Ye mighty gods!

Elv. Was't even so?

Leon. Told his dire practice also
Upon lord Raymond's life, which happily
My aid prevented.

Ram. O! most happily!
But died he by thy falchion?

Leon. No, my liege;
He gave me peaceful entrance to the palace,
And turn'd the swords, your faith confided to him,
Against the few that stood for you.

Ram. Cursed villain!
But what just weapon drank his blood?

Leon. He fell
As with unyielding rancour he pursued
His plan of death on Raymond, struck, 'tis said,
In the blind conflict with the guard, I sent
To save the noble stranger.

Ram. O! 'twas just!
My faint sight strangely swims! is Raymond here?
O lead me to him!

Ray. Here, my lord, is Raymond;
Your true and sorrowing friend!

Ram. What! pardon me?

Good man! Ah! Raymond, had thy tongue disclosed,
Before this fatal morn, that she was thine,
My passions, raging as they were, should never
Have injured thee, or made me what I am.
Why didst thou doubt my faith? why even induce me
To think thy love unplighted?
Canst thou indeed forgive me?—my worst crimes
Died ere they grew to act.

Ray. Ah! dear Ramiro!
Great, great has been my fault, and sharp my pain
For all its dire effects! let's now exchange
Most true forgiveness!

Ram. Yes! I die in peace!

Xim. Die? brother!

Ram. Die! night closes fast around me;
And soon my greatness, follies, crimes shall be
Less than heaven's lightest rack.

Queen. One joy, my son!
Yet will I give thy parting hour: Elvira,
Thy sister, whom we long have wept as lost,
Is found—is here.

Ram. Elvira? let me see her!
[*They lead* Elv. *to him.*
Death!—'tis Constantia!—Hence!—

Queen. No! she's our blood!
By proofs declared Elvira.

Ram. Oh! oh! [*dies.*

Queen. Ha! whence that fateful pang? life in alarm
Burst wildly from her chain!—O! softly rest!
Eternal mercy fold thee! and may we,
Taught by thy sad example, learn to bind
Passion's strong force, which, subject or supreme,
Works our best pleasures, or severest woes.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

6 MA 50

P. 115. l. 1. For "in her cheek," r. "on her cheek."

THE END.

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